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EXTRACTS
OF
LETTERS;

CHIEFLY ON
RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS.

WITH
MEDITATIONS *on some* SELECT PASSAGES
of SCRIPTURE.

BY MRS L — RE.

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TO THE READER.

THE first edition of the following Letters was published several years ago, but being now almost entirely out of print, the present has been brought forward, with the most sincere desire that its circulation, through the blessing of God, may be productive of good.

In these Extracts the noblest sentiments are expressed in the most elegant and lively manner: but the beauty of the language is undoubtedly nothing in comparison with that spirit of genuine piety towards God, and universal love to mankind which breathes throughout.—Happy they who are partakers of her spirit,—who know what it is to be called from darkness into light, and to glory in nothing so much as in Christ Jesus, and him crucified, whose blood alone cleanseth from all sin.

TO THE READER.

L E T T E R S

To MRS * * * *.

L E T T E R I.

YOUR letter, my ever dear friend, has been a great blessing to me. That you should write in the style you now do, filled me with such a sense of mine own unworthiness, and of the goodness of God to me, that it melted my stony heart, and drew tears from mine eyes. O would the God I adore enable me to be of any help to you, how would my soul dilate in thankfulness. Blessed Redeemer, draw us both, and so will we run after thee. O Spirit of Truth, descend on thine unworthy servants, and make us *fully* sensible of the seal of our redemption! Convince us still more deeply of our sins, and make us still more fully to know that they are washed away by the blood of Jesus. Thou knowest the burdens we labour under, the dissipation of our thoughts, our wanderings in prayer, our spiritual sloth, and all the hardness of our hearts. Stir us up earnestly to seek after the things of God, and fix our inconstant minds. Thou knowest that we desire (for this desire comes from thee) that the love of the Father may abide in our hearts. We beg thine assistance that we may eagerly seek after this love. O teach us

the prayer of faith, and enable us constantly and undauntedly to press forward toward the mark of the prize of our high calling. Be thou our guide, be thou our comforter for ever and ever. *Amen. Amen.*

What a task have you laid upon me? I watch over you: I your guide! This quite overcomes me. I cannot bear it. O, my love, there is no one so much wants a guide and a director as I do. Sure this letter of yours was particularly designed by Providence to humble me; but unworthy as I am, I will by the grace of God strive to do every thing you desire of me; but then you must return the same to me, and take me into the number of those you watch over. Let us go hand in hand in those paths which lead to everlasting life. What shall I say to quicken your steps? It was said to me since I saw you, by Mr ***, "I hope still to have "a great deal more pleasure from you, by seeing "you *press forward*." Think these words were addressed to you by the same person. O what a blessing of God accompanies the words of one who is uniformly a Christian, of one who spends and is spent for the service of his Master, of one who has no one view but the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Who would not strive earnestly to follow so bright an example? The very sight of such a person animates the soul in its warfare. O what soul which is the least alive to God, would not even *agonize* to be perfectly renewed after the image of Christ? Is your heart, is my heart so dead, that this will not affect it?—Alas, I grieve for mine own—may God give me to rejoice for yours.

I have time for no more. May the blessing and influence of the ever-adorable Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be continually with your soul.

I am your ever affectionate, &c.

LETTER II.

My dear Friend,

I THINK you are now through divine grace strong enough to bear what I am going to say to you, that I have long seen a mixture of pride and vanity even in the best of your performances; but I could hardly allow myself to believe it. What! have I often said, shall I judge so of her, whom every body admires for her surprising modesty and humility? Is it not because she is more excellent than myself, and therefore I am seeking to find some fault in her? Then I have often prayed to God not to suffer my soul to be deceived by any sinister views, and to perfect in you what was wanting. And this I trust he will do for us both, if we keep the longing eye of our souls steadily fixed upon him. O for holiness of heart! Let us labour, my dear companion, for holiness, as a dying sinner labours for life.

I had yesterday a most delightful letter from Mr ***. It sent me to my knees, so convinced of my black ingratitude to my heavenly Father, that I could neither find words nor thoughts sufficient to express my unworthiness; yet at the same time my heart was full of thanksgiving, under a sense of his unbounded mercies. O help me, my dear friend, to be more and more thankful! Such advantages—dearest Jesus, how justly great must be my condemnation, if I do not make suitable improvements. Take the latter part of Mr ***'s letter, apply it to yourself constantly, every minute if possible. “You have need therefore to watch and pray always, and then especially when you might seem to have least need. You have reason therefore to fear always; for your enemies are always watching. But you have reason likewise to rejoice always; because he that keepeth you never sleeps.”

LETTER III.

My dear Friend,

I HAVE read your letter with tears, and earnest prayers to God for you and for myself. We are both unworthy creatures; indeed, my love, we are, *more* unworthy than we can either express or conceive. O let us fly to the blood of sprinkling! There, and there alone, can we find help.

Thanks be to God, that you have a clear view of your own heart. This is a most profitable prospect, though a most dreadful one. Think me not cruel, when I wish that the Holy Spirit may *deeply* wound your soul with a sense of its corruptions. The deeper the conviction, the firmer the peace that follows.

I hardly know how to believe you, when you tell me you are hurried away by desires after worldly happiness. Is it possible? Alas, my friend, pardon the harshness of the expression, if the love of the world is in your heart, you are only a *painted sepulchre*, beautiful indeed outwardly, but within — My dear creature, I cannot bear to think this — A Christian hurried away with desires and endeavours after worldly happiness! If St Paul's character of a Christian is right, how far are you from being a Christian? *Ye are dead*, says he, *and your life is hid with Christ in God*.

May not these violent ragings of pride, vanity, &c. you speak of, be some of the last struggles of a dying enemy? When the strong man armed keepeth his house, his goods are in peace, but when he that is stronger comes upon him to overcome him, and to take from him that armour in which he trusted, no wonder the house is in a tumult. And this I

hope is your present case. But beware, my dear soul, of thinking, that you never shall be otherwise. Limit not the grace of God. He has only to say, *Peace, be still*, and immediately the winds and sea obey him. "But how to obtain this peace?" O, my dear friend, will you follow the advice of the meanest and most unworthy of the servants of Christ? Look upon yourself as being only *now* fully convinced of your guilt and dreadful condition. Look upon yourself as a *poor, lost, helpless, miserable creature*. Set before your eyes your sins, with all their aggravations; and when your soul is weighed down to the dust under a sense of your own vileness, then throw yourself at the foot of the cross: there lie as a loathsome leper before the almighty Healer: there let your parched soul *gasp* (with the utmost stretch of all your faculties) after those life-giving streams which flowed from Christ's hands, his feet, his pierced side; and there keep the eye of your mind fixed, until you have a fresh sense of his pardoning love, until the still small voice be heard in your soul—*Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee*.

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LETTER IV.

I WAS in hopes, my dear, that I had cause to think you had gained ground; but if I was mistaken, am very sorry. God forbid, however, that you should have gone back. I must not, for my own ease, believe that. The reason for your not finding so much comfort as usual flowing from the cross, is because you lay yourself too much out upon *outward* things. I doubt not but your own will is indeed very powerful, and it will ever be so, while you indulge yourself in

castle-building. Let your schemes be ever so good, they are (unless God had given you the means and power to perform them) merely the creatures of your own will ; and I do not know any thing that self-will more delights in, than in these imaginary good projects. Believe me, my dear soul, I speak from experience. There is nothing more encourages self-will, pride, and every temper we ought to subdue, than these schemes. For God's sake strive to get the better of this folly. I know your temper is naturally inclined to it, and therefore you ought to be more particularly watchful. Cannot you, my love, keep your thoughts fixed on the present moment, in a constant dependence on the leadings of the Spirit of God, and only wishing that every succeeding moment may bring a new accession of grace to your soul, without fixing on the particular means by which you would have it come. When the will is in this total resignation to God, it brings a peace to the soul which cannot be described.

I do not like your going to Vauxhall. I think you ought to try every possible means to get off. Suppose you were to be sincere, and own it was against your conscience. Pray God direct you what to do. If you are really forced to go, God will preserve your heart from the pollutions of the place. If this is the case, I think you will be in less danger of being hurt there, than in your visit to Mrs *** : for in this visit you will lie exposed to the worst enemy you have, that is, *yourself*. With those good people whom you love and admire, and who love and admire you, you will without the most constant watchfulness, be continually falling into self-seeking and self-applause.

I fear, my love, you will soon think me too plain in my speaking ; but I cannot answer it to my conscience, since what has past between us, not to warn

you of every thing which seems to me to prevent your progress in grace. Do not imagine though, that I wish you would not make this visit to Mrs ***; quite the contrary; but I wish you to keep the most constant guard upon your own heart, that what should be for your health be not unto you an occasion of falling.

I am your ever sincere and affectionate, &c.

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LETTER V.

My dear Friend,

I THANK God that you now see the danger of wandering imaginations in a clearer light : but I cannot guess what schemes a heart like yours (which I should hope was desirous of nothing but what immediately tended to increase in it the love of God) can pursue, which are not for what we call doing *good*. Depend upon it, my dear, if you can by an act of your will waste a thought on any future view of happiness, that regards only your situation in this world, you are yet far from the kingdom of God. To a soul that has but the *lowest* sense of the pardoning love of God, every thing that does not lead to a greater sense of this love is insipid. Outward things, according to the present circumstances we are in, ought to be attended to with prudence, though not with anxiety ; but that soul which runs out after them in future ought to *tremble*. My dear creature, are we not every moment on the brink of eternity, and may plunge in the next for ought we know ? What then have we to do, but every moment to grasp after new degrees of grace, new

power over sin, a still higher sense of the love of God, shed abroad in our hearts? "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."—Alas! what is a life of sixty or seventy years (supposing we could be certain of so many) to attain universal holiness? And shall we lose a moment? Outwardly we must a great many, but still our hearts may be gaining ground in the steady pursuit of that end for which we were created, and to which we have such glorious encouragements. What! shall Christ cry out to us in vain, "Give me thy heart?" Or shall we dare to divide that heart, which cost him so dear? O, my friend, be jealous for your redeeming God. Suffer not that soul for which he shed his precious blood, to stray one moment from him.

I am sorry you found pleasure at Vauxhall. I could not have believed it, had not you told me so yourself. I see, my love, I have thought far too highly of you. What a frightful distance is there still between you and a Christian! Could any one who had the mind which is in Christ, have felt pleasure where they saw God dishonoured, and their fellow-creatures running headlong to destruction? You had reason indeed to be ashamed, and thank God that you was so. The curiosity in regard to the astronomical instruments might distract your mind for a longer time, but your taking delight in these did not shew such an excessive depravity of heart, as the other: for astronomy is only *accidentally* made a means of dishonouring God, and hurting the souls of men: but Vauxhall is *necessarily* so.

I am your ever affectionate, &c.

LETTER VI.

I WRITE, my love, to you, to thank you for the pleasure you gave me last Thursday, and still to urge you more and more continually to press forward. Young as you are, you may perhaps be very near the end of your course, and the time given you to work in may, for ought you know, be very nearly elapsed. That form of yours, which now delights the eyes of your friend, and seems to promise a long continuance of health and vigour, may soon perhaps become defaced and loathesome meat for crawling worms, and that soul, that precious and immortal soul of yours, which is now far from loving its Creator as it ought to do, may soon stand naked in the sight of that God, to whom it has been ungrateful—its day of probation past—and its lot cast for a whole eternity. O my friend, my dearest companion in my pilgrimage, I conjure you by all your heart holds dear, that you lose not a moment ! O may that God, who is love itself, so inflame your soul with a sense of his love, as may consume all its dross, and make it, through Christ, an acceptable sacrifice to himself ! I think the last time I saw you I had the satisfaction of observing less of *self-seeking* in you, than I ever did before. Sure God will give me greatly to rejoice in you. Farewell. Whenever, my love, I think too well of you, fail not to tell me, and take shame to yourself for deceiving me.

I am yours, &c.

LETTER VII.

My dear Friend,

I THANK you for your letters, and rejoice at a great part of the account you give me. You have been very happy indeed; and it seems to me, that God gave you this happiness as preparatory to the trials which were to ensue, and if you should, after this goodness of God towards you, grieve his Holy Spirit, by suffering your heart to indulge any temper which you know to be contrary to his will, what words would be strong enough to paint your black ingratitude? I will deal plainly with you. I think you are now in a most dangerous situation. Every thing around you will conspire to tempt you to the sin which most easily besets you, and therefore you must not be *one moment* off your guard. You must pray without ceasing, even in the fullest sense of the words, and constantly strive to have strongly painted in your imagination, Jesus Christ and him crucified. There is nothing I think more tends to humble us, than the consideration of the sufferings of Christ. When you find yourself going to say or do any thing with a view to praise, think, this temper, this vanity of mine added to the weight of my Saviour's sufferings, and made more *bitter* his cup of *bitterness*. O, if you had a soul capable of feeling, if you have one spark of gratitude, can you think this, and *sin*? Were you now standing on Mount Calvary, near the cross of the blessed Jesus, suppose the dreadful deed was but now performing, and you saw the Redeemer of the world just nailed to his cross, say, would you help to drive the nails still deeper? Would you press the thorns closer to his sacred temples? Would you help to increase that load, which made him cry out,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Does not your soul shudder at the thought? O my friend, would you not rather die, gladly die, for this your suffering Lord? Would you not gladly be cut in ten thousand pieces to save *him* one pang? I know you would. And will you not strive against that sin which increased his sufferings? Will you not strive, my love?—Yes, sure you will. Is not every thing we can give up, by far too small a return for what this Redeemer has done for us? And shall we not give this little? Above all, shall we not give what most of all separates us from him, our *self-love* and *self-seeking*? Think, my friend, when any one is hinting to you, how extraordinary you are—"This person is ignorantly driving me from my Saviour." And if you should, which God forbid, find yourself tempted to indulge a vain complacency in their applause, think immediately how their praise would be turned into contempt, did they know your heart as it really is, and blush for thus deceiving them. Recollect some of the mean motives which perhaps have been the springs of some of your most admired words and actions, and let your soul within you be humbled to the dust. And, my dear, I beg you will be careful how you draw praise upon yourself by praising others. This is what I am very apt to fall into; and therefore I am the more sensible of its hurtfulness. And beware how you suffer yourself to attempt explaining nice points of doctrine, unless it is evident there will be good done by it, and then you may hope God will preserve you from the pride which generally accompanies this display of the capacity. May you constantly walk in the light of God's countenance, and go on conquering, and to conquer.

LETTER VIII.

I AM glad, my dear friend, that your visit to *** has been of such benefit to you ; and I pray God to continue it to your soul, and not to suffer these impressions to wear off. Temptations, doubtless, will attend every situation we are in, but the soul that rests secure in the love of God will easily conquer them. I wish you may find more and more benefit from the church-prayers : they are, for human compositions, very excellent, and I believe the best *form* of prayers that ever was put together. I cannot reproach you for that which God has pardoned, but you certainly ought now to be more watchful, that you fall not again : for then great indeed would be your condemnation. The danger which may accrue to you by going to Miss ***, will, I find, be known to you by experience *only*. She is certainly a good creature herself, and I love her : but there is a spirit haunts her lodgings, which is absolutely contrary to the Spirit I am seeking after. She is not capable, my dear, of watching your words with any ill design. Her only view is to find out your errors, and, if possible, cure you of them. I doubt not, but if you could converse with her alone, and keep clear of disputes, she might be of great use to you, and I hope God will bless this and every other means to the good of your soul. The most excellent people in the world will be of little avail, unless his Spirit assists, and with this there is nothing so weak and mean, but what may tend to increase his love in our hearts. For my own part, silence and solitude seem at present best for me, and I am more hurt by some religious people whom I converse with, than by the people of the world. Indeed there is scarce any one who does not in some measure hurt me, ex-

cept Mr ***. Numberless are the snares that lie in our way to the heavenly kingdom. It is truly a warfare; and a very difficult one, but the crown that awaits us at the end is well worth striving for, even unto blood. Besides, the encouragements and comforts we find in the way are glorious. Sure I am, that Alexander never found so much joy in all his conquests, as the soul that presses after the footsteps of Christ does in one conquest over self-will. There is more delight in suffering for God, than in reigning with the world. To clasp the cross of Christ close to the heart is more happiness than angels can give; and what inexpressible satisfaction is it to a soul, whose every faculty loves its Redeemer, to cry out,

Give me to feel thine agonies,

One drop of thy sad cup afford:

I fain with thee would sympathize,

And share the suff'rings of my Lord.

O God of unspeakable mercy, unbounded love, how little is all we can do or suffer for thee! O that we might not have a thought, nor even a pulse beat, but for our God! What is all that earth or heaven itself can give in comparison of thee? O uncreated beauty, how does every other excellence fade away at thy presence! how does a taste of thy love make every other love insipid, and a ray of thy light darken the brightest of created beings! O when, when shall our souls be wholly swallowed up in thee! When shall we know thee even also as we are known! Thou knowest the desire of our hearts, thou seest how our souls stretch, and pant after thee even to fainting! O give us to drink of the waters of life, even in this our pilgrimage, until we come to drink

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freely of them from that river which proceedeth out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb, for ever and ever. *Amen, Lord Jesus.*

LETTER IX.

My beloved Friend,

I HAVE been admiring the goodness of God to you, in ordering your being at L*** at a time when it must, instead of being hurtful, be profitable to your soul. The attending the sick-bed of a dear relation in danger of death, is a most glorious time for exercising a number of Christian graces. Such a scene as this keeps the mind in a most proper temper, humble, recollected, serious; and, in your particular circumstances, this illness of *** has freed you from most of the snares you apprehended. How does every thing work together for good to those who love God! And how ungrateful is that heart, which does not strive more and more to love him in deed and in truth! What, my love, are the inward temptations you complain of, and what are those unaccountable scruples? The best thing you can do is, not to argue about them in your own mind, but immediately fly to prayer; and if you cannot pray, only wish earnestly to pray. It is right, that you should think yourself the vilest creature breathing; and I am every day more and more convinced, that every soul which really loves God must necessarily in its own particular think the same: and in whatever proportion the love of God increases in the soul, in the same proportion will the sense of its own vileness and helplessness increase, till at last it is in a manner annihilated before God. This is a point

which the wisdom of the world cannot understand, and which no scheme of doctrine can teach the heart; but when we truly know Jesus Christ crucified, then we can cry out in earnest, What! *to me* such love? to the vilest and most ungrateful of all creatures? O whence such love to me?

I grieve for the sin you fell into. Had the temper of your mind been really charitable, you certainly could not lightly have spoken evil of any one. Nothing is more contrary to the true spirit of the gospel, than this want of universal love, and yet there is nothing so common even among those who in most other respects are unblameable. How ought we every moment to watch! O when shall we indeed be renewed after the image of Christ! Adieu.

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LETTER X.

WHAT, my dear companion, can I write so animating, as your present circumstances? God seems, I think, in a most peculiar manner to watch over your soul for good. What interesting, what heart-affecting scenes have you gone through? The account I have had of your ***'s death, has made me see the goodness of God to you in the strongest light, and I am ready to shudder, when I think that it is possible, even after all this, that you should again be ungrateful. O watch every moment! Think what horrors and agonies you must feel, if you should now suffer your heart to turn aside from this tender and merciful God! The circumstances you are now in are like five talents given to your care. Remember you are to gain to them five talents more, or ex-

pect to hear these dreadful words,—*Thou slothful and wicked servant, &c.* Your heavenly Father seems to be making a plain way before your face. I see you in a light almost *prophetical*. I rejoice, and yet I tremble. You seem pointed out, I think, as an instrument in the hands of God for the conversion of Miss ***; but here you will be in danger from your old enemies, pride, and love of teaching, and above all that self-setting-up which you have found so difficult to overcome. O my dear love, fail not every hour of the day to pray particularly for humility. I trust you are not in danger from any increase of fortune. No, surely. The heart of my beloved friend cannot be so mean and low, as to pride itself in dross. Perhaps you will find some difficulties in regard to the tempers of your ***; how necessary will it be for you in this case to place constantly before your eyes the meekness and lowliness of the Lamb of God? And, fear not, you will in all these things be more than conqueror, through him who has loved you.

LETTER XI.

I PITY you, my dear friend; I saw yesterday that your head was full, and your heart not so warm towards God as it sometimes is. O when shall we be free from these distractions? Or rather, when shall our love to our Redeemer be so intense, that our hearts may be constantly fixed on him, and we (as it were) walk through the fire without being burnt? I remember having sometimes said to you the beginning of last summer, "There is a great deal more in faith than we imagine:" and though, thanks

to the free grace of God, we both know more of faith now, than we did at that time, yet I may still repeat the saying, and may continue to repeat it, till our eyes are fully opened in eternity. "All things are possible to him that believeth," said the God of truth; and why then do not you and I conquer all sin? Because *we do not believe*. The unbounded riches of the grace of God in Christ Jesus are hardly more astonishing, than the perverseness of that soul, which will not fully trust in them. Christ stands ever ready to save to the uttermost, if we will but believe, that he can, and will do it; yet we draw back and shrink from his redeeming hand. We suffer the dark clouds of our fallen nature to obscure the glorious light of the promises of God. And though our heads may be fully convinced of their truth, and we may have some desires of attaining them, yet there is in the centre of our souls an hidden root of unbelief, which, just as we are going to lay hold on the prize, whispers—"How can these things be." And then we sink. I have heard it observed of the eagle, that she holds her young ones full against the bright beams of the mid-day sun: if they behold it stedfastly, she nourishes them, but if they turn away their heads, or shut their eyes, she dashes them to the ground. There is something very striking in this. A nominal believer, who makes a profession of holiness, has all the outward marks of a true believer, as these dastard eagles have of the others, but he cannot look stedfastly at the glorious beams of the Sun of righteousness? And how dreadful is the consequence? O my love, how ought we to watch and pray! How careful ought we to be not to lose sight for one moment of our immaterial Sun, lest the eye of our minds should by that means contract a dimness and weakness, which might render us incapable of stedfastly behold-

ing him, when he shall appear in all the fulness of his glory. May the God of mercy preserve you in all temptations, and be your portion in time and in eternity.

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LETTER XII.

My dear Friend,

I PRAISE God with my whole heart for your happiness and strength, and I pray him to increase it every moment. O may that blessed peace never leave your soul: it is eternal life begun, and ten thousands laid in the balance with this peace would be all lighter than vanity. It is a glorious sign, that in outward troubles, or inward temptations, you can leave the means of your deliverance entirely to God, without suffering your imagination to run out after the manner in which you probably may be delivered. O that we could always venture ourselves upon the mercies of our God! Then would he indeed work wonders for us—wonders which we now can scarce believe, though the God of truth himself declares them unto us. And this God will surely keep you in the dangers to which you are to be exposed, if you will be watchful to keep the eye of your mind constantly turned towards him, and wait and hang upon him, as a little child on its fond parent, drawing all your help, all your comfort from him, and him alone. If you have but little outward retirement, shut more closely the door of your heart, and there, in its inmost recesses, commune with your God and Redeemer, there be continually crying unto him,—Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee; thou knowest, O life and joy of my soul, that I desire nothing but to do thy

perfect will. O crucify in me the whole body of sin !
Give me an humble, a mortified, and child-like spirit,
and in thine own good time perfect the work thou
hast begun in my soul.

As to examples which are not good, I hope I may
say, that all the effect they can have upon my be-
loved friend (in her present happy state of mind) will
be to drive her nearer to her God, and in that near-
ness what comfort does the believing soul find ?

What though earth and hell engage

To shake that soul with fear ;

Calmly it defies the rage

Of persecution near.

Suff'ring faith shall brighter grow,

As gold when in the furnace tried :

Only Jesus will we know,

And Jesus crucified.

Yes, my love, let those who stile themselves our
best friends join with the world in calling us *mopes*
and *enthusiasts*. Still stedfastly fixed on the Rock
which cannot be moved, we will endure, nay joyful-
ly take up the reproach for his sake, who hid not
his blessed face from shame and spitting for our sakes,
to make us (accursed and lost creatures) heirs of eter-
nal glory. O that his strength may but accompany
us, and the light of his countenance continually
abide with us ; and then we shall not fail to go on
conquering and to conquer. *Amen.*

For God's sake avoid disputes of all kinds. I
was delighted the last time you were with me, to ob-
serve that you were greatly altered for the better in
this respect. Think not that I will omit to pray

for you, and fail not to pray for me. O my friend, soon will time be swallowed up in eternity.

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LETTER XIII.

I READILY believe you, my dear friend, that you have not brought back the same heart you carried with you : for I thought I discovered, the two last times I saw you, a falling off from the grace you had, and the happy state of mind you had been in : but for God's sake strive to recover yourself before you are sunk lower. Think how dreadful your case will be, if you should so grieve the Spirit of God, as to cause him to depart from you. - I know your heart to be ungrateful and deceitful ; and you know full well how much it is so ; but fear not to search into its most hidden corruptions. Was it ten times more vile and polluted than it is, the blood of Jesus is all-sufficient to cleanse it. And my dear soul, let me intreat of you earnestly to seek after a clear and constant sense of the pardoning love of God. . This only can enable you to trample all temptations under your feet : believe me, unless you really walk in the light of his countenance, you never can conquer all the powers and works of darkness. O seek the peace which passes all understanding. You have need enough of it, I am sure, considering the many snares you walk in. I really fear you do not diligently seek after God : it is very certain they that seek shall find ; and therefore that the Redeemer is not fully manifested in your soul is entirely owing to your sloth and negligence. How is it possible for you to keep your ground against temptations which are continually striking upon

your senses, unless you have in you the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen? When our understandings are clear in gospel-doctrines, we are too apt to imagine our hearts are so. My dear friend, for God's sake, deceive not yourself. O suffer not your soul to rest, till you can say with full assurance of faith, "My sins are forgiven." Depend upon it, this is the first step in true Christianity. O cry to God every moment from the bottom of your heart, and he will do more for you than you can either ask or think. I am a witness of his free and boundless mercy. For some days past I have been in the wilderness, my soul weary, faint, and desolate: no rejoicing in God: not one ray of the Sun of righteousness, but this morning, this blessed morning, my beloved returned to my soul, and I rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and could say with the fullest assurance, "My sins are done away—Christ is mine—" "God the Father is my reconciled Father—God the Holy Ghost is my Comforter and Guide." O my friend, my heart is now so overwhelmed I can scarce write. I could repeat a thousand and a thousand times over—*Christ is mine*. My soul is ready to spring out of its prison, and I could at this moment face death in all its most horrible prospects to go to my Redeemer. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?—My dear love, you know not what you lose by your negligence. O seek, strive, agonize; could you suffer the utmost tortures of body and mind, they would be all as nothing to gain one moment of this sweetness: and O pray for me, that I may not by sinning grieve the blessed Comforter, and lose my present peace. God be with you, my dear friend. God bless you both now and for ever.

LETTER XIV.

My dear Friend,

I MOURN for you, and may you mourn too from your very inmost soul, till God himself gives you the true comfort. O thou dear backslider, what shall I say? How shall I find words strong enough to make a lasting impression on a heart so inconstant, so slothful and careless? O that the Spirit of God would assist my weak endeavours, and point my otherwise unavailing words! You own you do not strive earnestly: alas, I too plainly see you do not. But the blessed Comforter strives with you, and still you resist and grieve him. How irksome is it to me always to write the same thing? My dear soul for God's sake, be more in earnest. How can you talk of sloth and carelessness, when you are standing on the brink of a precipice? Can you promise yourself another day? Are you fit to die in the state you are now in? Nay, are you not afraid to die! O if the Lord should say of you, as of the barren fig-tree, *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground*, how would you be overwhelmed with dread and confusion? For you who know so well what are the glorious promises of the gospel, to suffer your thoughts to run upon worldly things is inexcusable. It seems strange that you should think you love Christ more than you did when you was in a better state; however, above all things hold fast, and strive to increase this love; but then at the same time take care that you hate sin in the same proportion, and that you strive against it with the utmost earnestness: for to talk of loving Christ, and at the same time to give way to sloth, carelessness, and worldly-mindedness, is an abominable mockery. If you are encompassed with ten thousand temptations, never fear, so your own heart

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LETTER XV.

My dear Friend,

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pressing forward in the way of holiness. In the midst of all these prospects death may come : And are you fit to die ? We cannot too often ask ourselves this question, we cannot be too serious. There is only a moment between us and eternity. May the Lord Jesus so prepare us, that at whatever hour he calls, we may be ready, our lamps trimmed, and we ourselves as those who wait for the Bridegroom. Adieu, my dear. May the Almighty preserve you from all evil.

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LETTER XVI.

Of what service, my dear love, can any thing I say be of to you ? I have tried all means in my power to keep your mind more steady, but in vain. If God has at any time so blessed my letters that they have made any impression on you, it has gone off in two or three days : and when you have had those great benefits indeed of conversing with living Christians, though for a time you have been lively, yet you have soon sunk into your former sloth and carelessness. There must certainly be some hidden corruption in your heart, which causes this inconstancy. I often study you as I would a book, but you are in truth one of the most puzzling books I ever met with. I often rejoice to see in you (as I think) an increase of grace, and a decrease of that pride and selfishness, which, under an appearance of humility, you once had to a great degree. The last time you were with me, I thought you greatly advanced, and now you are fallen again into pride and selfishness. The Lord Jesus raise you up. Indeed, my dear soul, you grieve and wound me. You bring sorrow in my heart, and tears in my eyes : nay, and

Sometimes your letters tempt me to impatience ; but then I immediately recollect my own continual backslidings, and the long-suffering of God towards me, and can I be impatient with my friend ? If your want of retirement is not owing to yourself, never lay your coldness upon that : for was your heart sincere, God would strengthen you at all times to look up to him. But if, as you say, you trifled away your time, and indulged an unwillingsness to prayer, no wonder God withheld that portion of his grace he would otherwise have given you. Depend upon it, whenever you find an unwillingness to pray, that of all times is the most proper for you to pray in : therefore never say on such an occasion, " I will go read some good book, or do some good work, which may perhaps bring my mind into a better frame for prayer." No, do not so foolishly ; but go, and prostrate yourself before God with all your unwillingness ; and he will soon give you both the will and the power to praise him. Adieu.

LETTER XVII.

My dear Friend,

It is impossible for me to judge rightly, till I know more of your affair, and then I doubt not but God, if we ask in sincerity, will direct us both to agree in our sentiments as to what will be most conducive to your eternal welfare. However, thus much I can now say, *Be not unequally yoked with an unbeliever.* To marry a man in hopes of making him a Christian, will be leading yourself into temptation. The advantages you speak of may doubtless be great blessings to you, if you are very certain you can enjoy them. You ought to be very explicit with the

person, whoever he is, both with regard to your sentiments and his own heart. You cannot imagine the continual snares you will walk in, if you are joined to one who is not joined to Christ; especially if you have any fondness for him. As in a married state there are more allurements to draw the mind from God than in a single one, so (if the companion be a Christian) there are also advantages in it, which perhaps may almost make the balance even. But how dreadful will it be, if he who should be your help prove to you an occasion of falling? Above all things, my dear, try the sincerity of your own heart. Examine well whether you can accept this offer with a single eye to the glory of God, and the good of your own soul; and fear not, if you ask counsel of God in faith, nothing wavering, that he will give you freedom of mind, either to accept or refuse, as will be most profitable for you.

I do not wonder that your soul is at present distracted with worldly thoughts. An affair of this kind always occasions a thousand distractions, especially where it is in suspense. I fear your increase of company does not at all add to your spiritual happiness. The Lord Jesus bless you. I pity you. What need have we of continual assistance from above! How do we walk as on burning coals! O let us strive for that state of mind, in which we can say, nothing gives me pain but what is contrary to the will of God, and tends to draw my soul from him; and nothing gives me pleasure but as it is agreeable to his will, and tends to draw my soul nearer to him. Adieu.

LETTER XVIII.

My dear Friend,

I AM glad to write to you once more under the name of ***, and I hope God will give me strength to say all I wish at this important juncture. Important it is indeed to you ; and the nearer the time approaches, the more I feel for you. Alas you are now plunging into difficulties, which you can have no notion of until you experience them. You will have need of more than double watchfulness. O cry earnestly to God for grace and strength to keep your soul from sinking under the delusive arguments, which your three grand enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, will be continually attacking you with in your new state of life. You know, my love, in all our intercourse, I have not failed to set before you the disadvantages and distractions you must necessarily meet with in a married life. This I thought it my duty to do, though your intentions in regard to marriage were always founded upon Christian motives. Had I found you inclined to dedicate yourself more particularly to God in a single state, I should doubtless have encouraged that inclination : but as this was not the case, and I did not dare absolutely to dissuade any one from marrying, I have therefore only strove to guard you against the evils attending that condition, and pray God grant you may find them overbalanced by the good. The first evil which people are apt to fall into when they marry, is an extreme selfishness : of this I have seen most flagrant instances, but then the people were not Christians. O, my friend, remember you have taken upon you the sacred name of *Christian*. The

next thing which our sex in particular is very subject to, is a pretty indolence of soul, and a kind of hugging themselves as though they were become people of vast consequence; and then all they say or do, and every thing which belongs to them, is of importance. You will think perhaps there is no danger of your falling into any thing so low and silly as this; but do not think so, for without extreme watchfulness it will steal imperceptibly upon you; and if you once grow important, the flood-gates of worldly-mindedness will be set open, and your faith, your love, and peace, will be borne away by the impetuous torrent. The Lord Jesus bless you and keep you, and grant, that in all the changes of this mortal life, your heart may there be fixed where true joys are to be found.

Your ever affectionate,

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LETTER XIX.

My dear Friend,

I KNOW not how to assume to myself the character you mention, and yet I dare not neglect to do any thing, which you tell me may be of benefit to your soul. I know God can convey blessings by the meanest instrument, and relying wholly on his power and goodness, I enter again into this correspondence. You complain that I have not *lately* been so watchful over you as usual. In writing I certainly have not, and you know the reason; but as to speaking, if I have there failed, it is entirely owing to my being so apt to think highly of you. I fear in this I may have dealt with you as with my

my own heart—judged too favourably of both. May God give me a clearer insight, both into you and into myself.

I doubt not but your present condition contributes greatly to your being more in earnest, and you have need to lay up all the strength you can against what may be a time of trial. I am glad you found such a blessing on Sunday. I doubt not but the greater degree of light and joy you have, the more you will be assaulted by temptations, and these, perhaps, not only of a strange, but also of an impertinent and ridiculous kind. The devil will sometimes play the buffoon: But I have found the best way of dealing with these temptations was not to combat them, but to let them pass through the mind, as you would let a troublesome crowd of people pass by your door without regarding them.

The speaking evil of your neighbour before you are aware, though it has not all the blackness of premeditated evil-speaking, yet it is a sure sign, that you have not that spirit of love, without which the highest attainments are but as sounding brass, and as a tinkling cymbal. I often am sorry to see how much this divine temper is wanting amongst religious people. For my own part, I stand self-condemned in this, though it is a sin which I have even a natural aversion to! And I fear there are but few hearts in which this root of bitterness does not grow almost imperceptibly. However, the Captain of our salvation can give us to tread even this enemy under our feet. Let us therefore go on, nothing discouraged, trusting in his help, and following his steps, until we apprehend that for which we are apprehended of this divine Leader.

Your ever affectionate and faithful, &c.

LETTER XX.

My dear Friend,

MR V. has desired me to meet Dr ***, at his house; but though I honour the character of that worthy man, yet I rather *fear* than *desire* to do this. I really now dread the being set up as something to be thought well of. I see such a depth of pride and self-love in my own heart, that I dread any thing which can give the least food to these hellish tempers. I am well satisfied, that there can be no perfect peace, no perfect love, till these be done away. Was not the blessed Jesus *meek* and *lowly* of heart? Was he not despised and rejected? And we! O, my dear love, tremble for yourself and for me: We are esteemed, admired, and sought after. Do we not, think you, tread upon burning coals? How dangerous, how difficult to act for the glory of God, without sacrificing something to self? And this self is all that separates from God—this self is all that keeps the blessings both of time and eternity from our souls. O let us learn, and know, and feel, that we are nothing, and that God is all in all. Certain it is, that unless we die with Christ, we cannot rise to his life. Unless we are crucified with him here, we cannot reign with him hereafter. Let us then nail our corrupt nature to his cross, and continually mortify every temper that is contrary to his perfect will. Suffer we must; but the love of God will make all sufferings sweet, and his grace will enable us to conquer all difficulties. I rejoice at the victory, which, you tell me, has been given you over (I suppose) some reigning sin. Is not this encouragement to press forward? If you would preserve constant

peace and recollection, look more into your own heart, and lay not out yourself too much upon others. I have seen so much of the ill effects of this, that I dread it both for you and myself. Watch continually.

Your ever affectionate, &c.

LETTER XXI.

YOUR letter, my dear life, has given me great pleasure. This is indeed as it ought to be. And O by no means suffer this anxious desire after God, this thirst after holiness to abate, only let it be mixed with that kind of resignation, which implies a willingness to suffer, so you may be kept from sin. The pain you speak of *I rejoice in*. O my love, this is right, and may you more and more be conformed to Jesus Christ, and him crucified. A soul thus pained, thus longing, thus struggling for salvation, and at the same time lying low at the foot of the cross, and crying, "Lord, thy will be done," is an object in which the holy angels rejoice, nay, on which God himself looks down well pleased. To such a soul every gospel-blessing is near at hand. The Sun of righteousness is on the point of rising in it with healing in his wings; the eternal Comforter is ready to witness with it, that it is born of God, and to fill it with that peace which passeth all understanding. The blessed and adorable Trinity is ready to raise it from its fallen state, and to perfect the new creation. What encouraging prospects! Only let not this happy pain be taken from you by any comforts the world can give, but hold it dear to your heart, as

light to your eyes, till God himself change it to joy unspeakable.

I have long thought, that to wish for any thing, but the salvation of our own souls and that of others, is wrong : because in nothing else can we be sure that our wishes are agreeable to the will of God. I do not know how to believe, that you could *wish* for more riches, and if the being pleased with the thoughts of gain proceeded only from this motive, that you thought God was putting it more in your power to relieve the necessities of others, I would not dare to condemn you : but it is so difficult to take any satisfaction of this kind without some mixture of worldly mindedness, that we cannot be too careful in this respect ; nay, we ought rather to fear lest we should not be found faithful stewards of the talents put into our hands, as knowing that both in spiritual and temporal blessings, “ To whom much “ is given, of them shall much be required.”

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LETTER XXII.

My dear Friend,

IF it should please God to make any thing I write of benefit to your soul, I should greatly rejoice, but without that my words will avail nothing. And really the account you give of yourself at present is so strange, that I know not how to speak to you, or whether harshness or love is most necessary. This I know, that my own soul is greatly pained for you, but I dare not flatter you. "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And, doubtless, to take a pleasure in exposing the faults of others is a temper as distant from the Spirit of

Christ as hell is from heaven. Believe me, my dear life, if the love of God reigned in your heart, you would rather cover than expose the faults even of the vilest of men. And when obliged, for their own good, or the warning of others, to speak to the disadvantage of any one, you would do it with fear and caution, at the same time looking up to God, lest any bitterness should mix; either with your thoughts or words. *God is love*, and infinite streams of love are perpetually flowing from him, through all created nature. His acts of judgement, as well as mercy, are only acts of love, and designed, either to remove or to lessen the evils occasioned by the fall of angels and of man; and the soul which is born of God will as necessarily partake of this divine principle of universal love, as the child you now carry within you partakes of your corrupt nature. You have great reason then to tremble, while this temper has any footing in your soul. Do not sit down contented, because you have intervals of recollection, but wrestle mightily with God in fervent prayer, until he speak peace to your soul, and his love be shed abroad in your heart, before which this evil disposition will fly as a mist from the morning sun. You greatly affect me by what you say in regard to the expected hour of danger; but fear not. No creature on earth can be more unworthy than I am; and the God of mercy protected me, and gave me strength and courage, and calmness; and I doubt not but he will shew the same mercy to you: nay, I have a strong confidence he will, in your hour of extremity, give you a clearer sense of his pardoning love, than you have yet experienced. Fear not, only believe, "All things are possible to him that believeth."

It has pleased God, within these few days, to give me a severe trial, and, eternal glory be to his name,

I have flood it, crying only, *Lord, thy will be done.* My little boy was taken on Saturday evening with strong convulsions, and between that time and Sunday evening, had, I believe, full forty fits. He is now much better. God is ever merciful: he brings to the borders of the grave, and raises up again. O how good it is to suffer? How glorious to have grace triumph over nature? How sweet to lie low at the foot of the cross, and bless God for every thing which more conforms us to the suffering Jesus? Be watchful and earnest. Adieu.

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LETTER XXIII.

My dear Friend.

WHERE the consideration of the prophecies is a means of stirring any one up to greater diligence, of making them sit looser to the things of this world, and seek more earnestly after the things of God, they cannot consider them too attentively. Every soul should carefully observe that way, in which God particularly leads it, and punctually follow every means, which it finds by experience brings it nearer to God. Some are awakened and brought low by meditating on the severe judgements of God; others are melted down by reflecting on his mercies. Some are employed usefully to themselves, and it may be, to others, by accurately considering the several amazing dispensations of God, in the whole scheme of our redemption. Others, by a more simple and general view of God, as infinite wisdom and infinite love, rest calmly on his will, and though in a lower and less shining way, pursue the same end, viz. salvation by the blood of the Lamb from the power as

well as from the guilt of sin, and union with the pure fountain of all happiness. All these ways are good in themselves, and are made so to every soul, which in *them* follows the leadings of the Spirit of God. But I may make that which is good in itself evil to me, by using it *only because* another thinks it right, and not because I find it the means which most unites my soul to Christ: and therefore we ought never to blame any one for not being affected by that which affects us.

It is very certain that the judgements of God are now abroad in the earth, and that some of the signs of the last times plainly appear: this (whether the calculation in the letter be right or wrong) is obvious to every one, and calls aloud for seriousness and watchfulness. Happy are those who shall stand unmoved in the time of temptation. Happy are those who, when all nature is agonizing around them, can fly to the only Rock of refuge, and there find shelter from the storm, and shadow from the heat. But, above all, happy are those who shall have the glory of suffering for their Redeemer, of sealing their testimony with their blood, or in the midst of the fire shouting for joy, and blessing God for a martyr's crown. These, these are glorious prospects, and, weak as we are, should God honour us with a trial like this, he would also give us strength to be more than conquerors. In the mean time, let us not be weary or faint in our minds, but manfully fight till we obtain complete victory over our evil hearts; and then shall we stand with humble confidence even before our Judge, and though all nature were dissolved, we should remain unshaken, and be wholly swallowed up in joy full of glory. Amen, Lord Jesus.

LETTER XXIV.

My dear Friend,

I THANK you for your last letter, and I bless God that you were not offended with mine. This bearing of plain-dealing is a comfortable proof to me of your sincerity. If temptations increase, God will give a proportionable increase of strength. There wants nothing but faithfulness on your part to the grace already given. I know not the particulars of your sufferings, but I know it is good to suffer. It is a discipline all must go through, who make any tolerable advance in the school of Christ. I could wish you to seek more after religion than comfort. Constant and heart-felt resignation is a bulwark against every trial, and a foundation for solid peace, and joy transcendently pure. The whole state of a soul made perfect in love, stands in that one petition, *Thy will be done*; and if we could but preserve that temper which these words describe, I know not what could hurt us. Suppose now, when I first wake in a morning, I should lift up my heart, "Lord, I bless thee for this new day which thou hast given me. In this day I shall have fresh manifestations of thy will concerning me, either in comforts or in sufferings. Lord, I am thy creature, deal with me as it shall please thee: only leave me not to myself, but let thy grace be sufficient for me, and thy strength be made perfect in my weakness." When settled in this frame of mind, suppose my trials to begin. I am tempted by the perverseness and evil tempers of my own family to impatience, to anger; but I immediately recollect myself, "Lord, it is thy will I should bear this; par-

"don their perverseness, and give me to be thankful
 "for every opportunity of self-denial and forbear-
 "ance." Well, now another, and more difficult
 trial appears. I am to behave to people whom I
 know to be my bitter enemies, whom I know to be
 continually watching occasions of evil against me,
 as if they were my dear friends. Here every faculty
 of the soul is alarmed, and nature shrinks back af-
 frightened. But what does grace say? "Lord, I
 "thank thee for this glorious trial! What a bless-
 "ing is it, I should be permitted to drink of the
 "same cup my Saviour drank of! O bless these
 "mine enemies; fill their hearts with thy love; let
 "thy will be perfected both in them and me." This
 temptation is conquered, but another, and a more
 trying one immediately succeeds. I am treated un-
 kindly by people I love, and who are really my
 friends. Here my heart is wounded, it sinks, it is
 ready to faint: but recovering itself, it rests upon
 God, and says, "Lord, even in this, thy will be
 "done, and let the sufferings of Christ be per-
 "fected in me, that I may be also a partaker of his
 "glory." In this manner one might instance in all
 kinds of affliction, and find comfort and strength in
 each.

I know not how to think so meanly of you, as to
 imagine your heart in danger of being drawn away
 by the world. But I know I am always apt to set
 you in too high a light, and it may be so in this case.
 This one thing, however, I am sure of, that we are
 fighting for *eternity*, and this against innumerable
 enemies, dangerous ones without, but far more dan-
 gerous ones within. If the Lord himself was not on
 our side, how could we maintain our ground one mo-
 ment. To his almighty protection I commend you
 and yours; and am

Your ever-affectionate, &c.

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LETTER XXV.

To the REV. MR *****.

Dear Sir,

I AM much obliged to you for your kind concern on my account. My illness, I believe, is rather troublesome than dangerous, a disorder in my stomach, which has been attended with a slight fever. I was ill when you and Mr *** came to see me, though I did not complain, and I looked upon it as a particular blessing: for had my spirits been in their full flow, an event so much wished would have too much elated me; but my disorder served to keep the balance of my mind even. I see the goodness of God towards me in every thing, and therefore sickness or health, life or death, are equally welcome to me, as coming from the same gracious hand. Nature, it is true, shrinks at suffering, but grace triumphs in resignation, and is thankful for the dispensation of the present moment, without wishing or willing in regard to the future. But I hope to learn some lessons of this kind from you next Sunday. Till then farewell, and may the fulness of every gospel blessing rest upon your soul.

Yours, &c.

LETTER XXVI.

Dear Sir,

THE judgements of God upon Lisbon are dreadful indeed. I know not what heart can be hard enough to hear of them without concern. What

but the amazing mercy of a long-suffering God can prevent London from feeling the same dreadful blow! And if God should arise to shake terribly our land, what great reason will those persons have to be thankful, whom God has drawn from all worldly schemes of happiness, and fixed their hearts on a basis which can never be shaken, though the earth be moved, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea? I have been much comforted in respect of the miseries of others by this scripture;—*When the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants thereof will learn righteousness.* If such a blessed end is produced by these severe acts of justice, have we not reason, even in the midst of terror, to admire and adore? The whole universe appears to me to be in the hand of God as a grain of dust in the balance; and I, a creature more insignificant, more worthless and sinful than can be conceived, am among the rest in this almighty hand, and *all is safe.* My heart is by nature painfully tender, and yet in the midst of feeling, either for myself or others, there is a secret satisfaction in my inmost soul, that God is glorified in every act of his providence, whether of judgement or mercy; and I hardly know how to form any other prayer than *Thy will be done.*

I fear I shall not see you on Thursday:—but, wherever you are, may the God of all consolation be your light and your shield, and bring you safe to that city which has eternal foundations.

I am your ever obliged friend and servant, &c.

LETTER XXVII.

By what you said to Mr ***, when he had the pleasure of seeing you, I imagine you think my illness is owing to a cause of which I am by no means certain: however the bare probability of such a charge would not be without my immediately reflecting on the dangers and temptations that would attend it. A soul that is really desirous of attaining the *pure* love of God, is exceedingly jealous of any thing that has a possibility of drawing it from its centre of happiness, and looks upon any event which has this possible tendency (let the world term it blessing or misfortune) with a tender anxious fear, which none can understand but those who have felt it. This was my case, and my imagination would sometimes paint a thousand instances which *might* draw my soul down to earth; and this fear (though it never made me wish any thing but what was the will of God) would bring the tears to my eyes, and cause an uneasiness, which doubtless proceeded from want of faith. But that God whose mercies are renewed every morning, soon delivered me from those fears, and calm peace, perfect resignation, and watchfulness succeeded: and for this fortnight past, though I have been in continual uncertainty whether I should continue in the condition I am thought to be in or not, my mind by the all-sufficient grace of God has been so equally kept, that I have not had the least wish or choice of my own, but have been equally pleased with whatever seemed to be the leadings of Providence concerning me. And you cannot think, what a work of annihilation this uncertainty has been the means of carrying on in my soul, which I see plainly in the

nature of things could not so well have been effected by any other. I never can be enough thankful for the unspeakable mercies of God to so unworthy a creature. My will has been brought into a deadness, which I, even a few months ago, should have thought almost impossible; and I see, and have some foretastes of that state which is called the pure and disinterested love of God, in a manner I cannot express.

I should be very glad to see you when your affairs will permit, for I have not had one help from without since I saw you last; nor have I had many of those joys and comforts from within which have sometimes been indulged me; and indeed my animal frame would have been too weak to have borne them, unless God had in a particular manner supported it: for every faculty of my soul has been weighed down by continual sickness. I have not only been incapable of any outward application, but also of intense thinking or fervent prayer: but, in the midst of this my weakness, the strength of God has more abundantly been made manifest, that I might be abased even to the dust, and his free grace exalted; so that I well understand what St Paul meant, when he said: *Therefore will I glory in infirmities, in weaknesses, in distresses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*—But I must finish this already too long letter. Farewell! May the dew of heaven from above continually refresh you!

LETTER XXVIII.

January 19, 1756.

Dear Sir,

I AM much obliged to you for your letter, from which I have learnt a very useful lesson, viz. never to fancy that the particular circumstances of others would be more advantageous to me than my own. You are ready almost to envy *me* my *many* hours of retirement; when at the same time I am continually complaining that I have so *few*, and often crying out, when *shall* I have a *whole day* to myself? And then I frequently think, were I a man, and in the ministry, my time would then be *all* spent for God; but *now*, what an inundation of trifles flow in upon me, which it is impossible for me to avoid, without altogether going out of the world.

I enter, with fear and trembling, upon the subject on which you bid me write. My abilities are really far from being equal to it: for although I know many Christians who would immediately cry out, that it needed not one moment's consideration, I dare not do so; for I now really *feel* the weight of it upon my soul. It is a most alarming truth, that a minister may speak with the tongue of men and of angels, and that the power of God may so accompany his words as to make them the means of converting thousands; and yet, for want of duly searching into his own heart, he may suffer it to be overgrown with poisonous weeds, with tempers and inclinations, which, if unsubdued, will absolutely shut *him out* from that kingdom of glory, to which he is leading others. How *easy* for a man who is continually setting forth the glorious truths of the gospel,

and enforcing holiness of heart and life, to imagine (for want of constant self-examination) that *he himself* is what he preaches? This is a most dangerous snare; and therefore how absolutely necessary is that retirement which affords opportunity for a diligent search into the recesses of the heart, and gives the soul leisure to wait in awful silence before God, where free from every object of sense, and from the workings of imagination, it may with all its faculties prostrate before the Eternal Trinity, and feel itself to be nothing, and God to be *all in all*? But then it may be asked, Shall not a man who, with singleness of heart, spends and is spent for the service of God, be so kept by divine grace, that his soul shall suffer no loss by the want of retirement? Doubtless. Where sincerity and singleness of heart are preserved, that soul shall be defended as with a shield. But this I take to be the grand temptation of every minister of the gospel: he sets out perhaps (though this is not always the case) with a single eye to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. The power of God accompanies his words, the hearts of the people fall under him, his reputation daily increases, till at last he becomes popular; he sees himself surrounded by a crowd of people, who for the most part hear him as an angel of God, their thirsty souls gasping after the truths he utters. An innocent and an holy joy fills his heart; "Here are souls that may be won to Christ, and that by me!" "Lord, what amazing love, that I, who am the least of all thy servants, should be thus blest!" So far all is well, all is happy; but the subtle enemy of mankind so strongly impresses this, *by me*, that a self-complacency, separate from the glory of God, arises in his heart, and this, if not immediately quelled, leads him to the brink of a precipice. God still, for the sake of others, continues his usefulness; but

every conversion which he is the means of making is fresh food for his self-love, and by degrees he becomes so dead to the love of God, that he preaches even the purest doctrines of the gospel with the same spirit with which a lawyer pleads at the bar. But, on the contrary, that *blessed servant* of Christ who stedfastly pursues the narrow path, who conquers every rising of self-love in its first appearance, and constantly refers all the good he does or speaks to the Author and Giver of all good, *he shall be kept in all his ways, and blest in all his works.* And though his soul may pant for retirement, thinking he should there enjoy a nearer communion with God, and make higher advances in the divine life, this may not perhaps be immediately permitted him: but in order that his future crown may be the brighter, *God may make his present usefulness a sure sign to him,* that he ought to continue his constant labours for others, though it should be with much temptation, fear, and trembling. However, this is very certain, that God to a servant *thus sincere,* will point out a plain path, either by inward leadings, which cannot be mistaken, or *outward providences.*—
Adieu! Pardon the weakness of this; let me see you the first time you have to spare, and believe me

Your ever obliged and affectionate servant,

LETTER XXIX.

Dear Sir,

WHATEVER the Spirit of God makes useful to my heart, either from scripture or from spiritual authors, I thankfully receive, and give him the glory: but I

well know there is but one great touchstone, by which all doctrines are to be tried; and therefore I hope your kind fears for me, lest I should not enough esteem the written word of God, are needless: I am so far from setting any human writer on a footing with this, that I scarcely read them at all, *i. e.* in comparison of my Bible. I look over some few, but this is very different from the manner of reading you recommend, and which I strive by the grace of God to practise; nay, it would be the greatest slavery to me you can conceive, if I were obliged to read many religious books; however, I return you the sincerest thanks for your care, and beg you will in *all* things watch over me with a "godly jealousy."—But, my dear friend, could you imagine that I inquired after the *state* of your mind according to the *common acceptance* of the word? I only desired to know what spiritual blessings you had both from without and within, that I might share them with you: and this I was emboldened to do by the sweet account you had given in your former letter of the blessings you enjoyed at Bristol. The Lord refresh your soul continually with the rich streams of his redeeming love, and may his everlasting arms be beneath you! I know your present state of suspense between the visible and invisible world, is a dispensation big with divine love; and was I to pray for you that prayer which my soul most loves, it would be, "That you *should* lie in the "hand of God, as an instrument without choice, "till the will of God was perfected in you." This would be the prayer of pure love and enlightened faith; but if I descended to the tenderness of friendship, I should ask your speedy recovery. If it should be given me to see you again in this world of vanity and woe, I shall be thankful, and perhaps it may be so: but I know not—*something*

seems to whisper me, that the thread both of your life and mine is nearly spun. For my part, I have within these few days had a sweet call to eternity, by a sudden and violent disorder in my stomach and bowels (called, according to the fashionable phrase, a *nervous cholic*), which seems to have set me a good way forwards on my journey: happy pain! kind messenger! O my friend, I have nothing but mercies to tell you of. So supported! such wondrous grace! such boundless love! I all sin and misery. The Saviour all tenderness and mercy. The *probable* approach of death delightful. No sting remaining! No clog upon my chariot wheels. Mercies too from without which I had never before experienced in a time of sickness. The Rev. Mr *** praying and singing by my bed, with such power of faith and love, such unction from above! Does this hurry the spirits? Does this endanger? Far from it. I protest not only my soul rejoiced, but even my body grew better as he prayed. Do not fail to thank God on my behalf, and pray for me that I may not be ungrateful to such amazing mercy. May the Lord Jesus preserve you, sweeten every pain, and make you rejoice continually with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Your ever affectionate and obliged servant,

June 7, 1756.

LETTER XXX.

June 15, 1756.

Dear Sir,

Your very kind letter has pained me extremely, but I hope it has been made a means of humbling

my soul before God. How little do I deserve that you should write to me in this manner? Alas you do not know me; I am less than the least of all the mercies of God; do not, I beseech you, think so highly of me; it really makes me ashamed of myself. O that I could be lower than the dust! O that I could shrink into nothing at the presence of my God? The way too in which you speak of yourself puts me in a strange dilemma. I dare not pay religious compliments, and yet how shall I write to you as if I believed you? How much greater has your cross of sickness been than mine? So long, so lingering, such inconveniences as it lays you under: but yet this is certainly no excuse for a soul taught of God, as *yours is*, to wish its removal. Do you *indeed wish* for any thing but sanctification? Surely, my dear friend, you wrong yourself, it cannot be. O remember the glorious path you have often pointed out to me, of perfect resignation: I have considered you as a pattern to me, *particularly in this*. I must not think that *you* have any "reluctance to bear the cross;" it would wound my heart too much. Do I not know that you love God above all things? Do not I know the sincere desires of your soul after holiness? And is there any way in the spiritual life, which so immediately leads to holiness, as *voluntary suffering*? Happy are those to whom God gives the grace of *doing* much for him, for his cause, for his people; but *ten times* more blessed are they who *suffer* with Christ. Is there a joy absolutely pure? It is that of suffering. O did we but know the health, the peace, the life that is at the bottom of every bitter cup; with what alacrity should we drink it? With what thankfulness, nay with tears of joy should we cry, Lord, what unbounded mercy, what astonishing grace is this, to a worm like me; that *I* should be led in this *most excellent* way; that

I should be made to tread in those footsteps which are *most eminently* thine? Dearest Saviour, sweet is thy cross, sweet thy thorny crown; thy stripes, thy wounds, thy pain, more delightful than beds of roses. Let other souls glory in Mount Tabor; *my* joy shall be to stay with thee on Mount Calvary, that I may be made conformable to thy death. Such would be the language of a soul truly sensible of the great benefit of suffering, and embracing with sweet complacency the cross, which thus united it with its Redeemer. May this be the language of your soul and mine; then shall we be found unshaken in the fiery trial, and come out as gold purified seven times. But after all, what suffering have I had in this illness? It can scarce be called suffering, when God sensibly supports. The suffering is when *he* leaves the soul (as it were alone) in pain or in affliction, to struggle with the powers of darkness, which at such a time eagerly beset it. This I have sometimes known, and this is *suffering indeed*.—I have the same confidence in God for my dear Mr *** that you have. Was I to be removed, I doubt not but it would be a means of good to his soul: but it seems at present to be the will of God that I should continue some time longer. My inward weakness is not so great, and my pain, though pretty constant, is so slight that it is scarce worth the mentioning. I thank God that your health is returning, and trust we shall meet again on this side the river: but, in the mean time, pray earnestly for me. I fear ease more than pain. Farewell. May you and I constantly join in this prayer, “Thy will be done in us, and by us, in time and in eternity.”

Your ever obliged and affectionate friend,

LETTER XXXI.

July 1, 1756.

My dear Friend,

I RECEIVED your letter with much thankfulness, for I began to be very uneasy at not hearing from you in so long a time ; and you have for these two days lain with such a weight on my spirit, that I knew not how to account for it. I well know the manner in which the praise you bestowed was meant ; but you know not how I dread self-complacency ; and therefore, though I often find that praise humbles me, yet it gives me a pain I know not how to express. I have indeed often heard you speak those words you mention, but they never affected me till now : and did you speak them in “ the bitterness of your “ soul ? ” — Call me no more your friend ! I am not worthy the name. How often have I heard them with unconcern, looking on them only as words of course, a kind of common-place humility. Will you forgive me ? I promise you for the future I will pay more attention to every thing you say : I will not by the grace of God be so indolent and so faithless in the things which concern you as I have been. I know I am apt to think too highly of those I love, and I hate to be disturbed in the thought. You cannot imagine how ingenious I am in casting these burdens from me : a latent fear of displeasing, and a false humility, furnish me with arguments. “ Why “ should I pretend to speak so and so, to people so “ much more advanced in grace than myself ? ” Not considering that God can work by the weakest and most unworthy. But cannot I pray ? O my friend, if ever I have been wanting in ardent prayers for

you, surely I hope never to be so again : that communion of spirit which I have with you in the life of Christ, shall, I trust, add wings to my prayers on your behalf, and gain new degrees of strength to my own soul.

Your last letter is a comfortable earnest to me, that I shall at least have one companion in the way which God has sent me to walk in, *the way of the cross, the inward crucifixion*, as you so justly call it ; (thanks be to God for this refreshment to my spirit!) Many speak of this, and because St Paul mentions the being crucified, &c. with Christ, they preach about it ; but I see plainly that *you* not only *speak* but *feel*.—And *do* you know *so much* of the *bitterness* of the creature ? The Lord be praised ! May you daily know it more and more ! I am sure this experience will only make the hidden manna the sweeter : and I am equally sure, that those bitter draughts are absolutely necessary to every soul that would *wholly* give itself up to God. It is easy to talk of the will being perfectly resigned, swallowed up in the will of God, &c. and while this only floats as a notion in the brain, no great sufferings will attend it. But when the soul really feels what this implies, that it is a being cut off from the creature, then it knows indeed what it is to suffer, then it fights as it were in the midst of the fire. Every thought must be brought into obedience to Christ ; and God effects this in the soul as it is able to bear it : first one trial comes, then another ; one strikes at love in the creature, another at self-love, a third at spiritual pride ; and the fight continues till Christ has brought down all his enemies, and led captivity captive. And to attain this state of glorious liberty, who would not rejoice to suffer ? What a coward must he be who would fly from a field of battle, where to die is to conquer ! O what blessed encouragements has a

Christian to fight manfully! Let us not be weary or faint in our minds; we have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin; but let us not fail to do it. Have we not a Captain who treads all the powers of death and hell under his feet? Is he not Jehovah, mighty to save? And has he not promised that he will save even to the uttermost? The way we have to travel is indeed long, and there are lions in it; but what of that! Jesus the Deliverer is with us, and nothing shall hurt us.

Through Jesus we can all things do,

all things suffer, all things conquer, and what would we more? Farewell. May the peace of God be with you, and make your soul to rest on him.

Your ever obliged

and affectionate friend and servant,

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LETTER XXXII.

*To Miss ****.*

Wednesday Night, February 13, 1754.

A COLD has been the means of preventing me from spending the evening in the trifling manner which you, my dear friend, have been forced to do; though I cannot but hope that your mind, in the midst of all this noise and nonsense, has been enabled to keep itself in a state of recollection, and that you are still more fully convinced that what *all the world* calls pleasure and gait is mere vanity and vexation of spirit.—I thank you for your letter: it has given me great satisfaction, and fresh cause to praise God

on your account : I rejoice in your joy, and may our gracious and kind Redeemer increase and establish your joy and peace in believing ! You have indeed the utmost reason to be thankful that such a work of mercy has been begun in your soul ; and fear not but that blessed Spirit who has convinced you of sin, and led you to look to the only means of deliverance, will perfect the work he has begun. What a happy sign, that you can already *lay hold on* and *apply* the promises to yourself ? O continue instant in prayer for still greater degrees of faith ; and shun, as you would the most deadly poison, every *action, word, and thought* which is contrary to the Spirit of God ! And always reflect with the most thankful heart on the love of Christ to your soul : think that our merciful Saviour is more ready to hear than we to pray : think with what joy the father received the returning prodigal, and be assured that *you and I*, and every returning *sinner*, will be received with the same joy, clothed with the same glorious robes, and shall be admitted to sit down at the same feast, even the marriage supper of the Lamb !

I am, with the utmost tenderness,

Your ever affectionate and faithful friend,

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LETTER XXXIII.

Wednesday Night, March 20, 1754.

My dear Friend,

I AM rejoiced and bless God that your mind was in so happy a state, while your soul was in the midst

of folly and confusion. You observe very justly, that those diversions are absolutely unfit for one who is seeking salvation. Nothing indeed can be more contrary to the spirit of the gospel, than what *the world* calls *polite amusements*. What can be more absurd than for one who wishes to be a Christian, who desires the mind which was in Christ, and that justification by faith, which alone can produce in the heart true humility and meekness, deadness to the world, constant resignation to God, and fervent desire to do his will : what absurdity is it for such a person (*in all the extravagance and glare of dress*) to be swimming or skipping about a room, and wishing to draw the attention and admiration of the most vile and profligate part of the human species ? What absurdity for such a person as this to sit in that house, which is as much devoted to the devil as the church is to God, for three hours together, to hear obscenities at which a virtuous Heathen would have blushed ?—If you ask twenty of the people who do these things whether they are Christians, nineteen of them will answer, they are Christians to be sure ! What do you think of them ? Or if they are not now quite so good as they ought to be, they hope to be better by and by ! But can a soul which *truly seeks* after salvation do these things ? No, certainly. And when the Spirit of God has wrought in a soul this hatred of the vanities it used to delight in, it has reason to rejoice *indeed*. What greater mark of the love of God to us, than his having thus drawn us to delight in himself ? If we love a friend, we desire and strive that this friend may return our love and joy, and delight in us : and, amazing condescension ! will the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, the God who called *angels* and *archangels* into *being*, thus deal with us poor-sinful worms ? What heart can withstand such love ? What heart at this thought.

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BLESSED are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted! Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. These are the words of the God of truth; and can you then, my dear friend, be discouraged because you are now mourning after this God, who only hides himself from you, that you may more earnestly seek him? Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. There certainly is no heaviness like this: when a soul has been sensible (though in the least degree) of the influences of the Sun of righteousness, and finds his all-cheering beams withdrawn, how painful, how heavy is the darkness! This is indeed darkness that may be felt; but when the joy returns, what peace! what happiness! Look, my dear, on the material sun, observe how all the creation around you is brightened and gladdened when he shines; and be assured, that, on your earnestly seeking after Christ, he will in like manner shine again on your soul, and make it glad with the light of his countenance.

Yours ever affectionate,

Wednesday Night,
April 1754.

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LETTER XXXV.

July 19, 1754.

I AM very glad, my dear, that your mind is in so happy a state, and that you seem to have so true a sense of the *littleness* of what *all* the world calls *great* and *desirable*. The love of God and the love of the world are directly opposite to each other; and therefore St John says, *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*: this is a sure rule to try ourselves by. We may talk well, and act well in some outward things, nay perhaps be zealous for the genuine doctrines of the gospel, yet all this while, if the love of the world remains in our hearts, we may be very certain we are not Christians.—I fear you have not much opportunity of being alone, but see from your letter that you make good use of what you have; however God is both able and willing to preserve (either alone or in company) the soul which constantly looks toward him. I was afraid your being at *** might hurt you, but thank God I find I had no cause to fear: you seem, I think, rather to advance than go back. Give God the glory! For whatever good is in you is all from his free and boundless mercy: and cease not constantly to fight in the strength of your Redeemer, against every sin, and fear not but he will set you free, take off the heavy burden of which you complain, and clothe you with *his perfect righteousness*. Adieu.

LETTER XXXVI.

You tell me, my dear, that your present dark state of mind is owing to your thoughts dwelling so much on worldly objects: but carry your sincerity yet a little further, and tell me if it is not some *one particular object* on which your thoughts are fixed, and which rivals your Creator in your heart? I much fear this is the case; and if so, you will find it very difficult to conquer. But let not any difficulty discourage you from striving to "pluck out this right eye, and cast it from you;" the grace of God is sufficient for you, his strength is made perfect in your weakness; and you may depend upon it, that as soon as ever you have given up your idol, the Sun of righteousness will again arise in your soul, with healing in his wings; the God of mercy will again be known by you, as your reconciled Father in Christ; and the blessed Spirit will lead and guide, and fill you with that peace which passeth all understanding; and you will walk in all the ordinances of the Lord rejoicing.

Your ever affectionate and faithful friend,

Tuesday Morning, }
 Aug. 12. 1754. }

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LETTER XXXVII.

My dear Friend,

YOUR last letter gave me great pleasure. I sincerely rejoice in the happiness of your soul, as in

that of my own, and I hope God will strengthen you more and more by his grace, so that you may forsake every thing for him. Above all sacrifice your own will: let this constantly be the language of your heart, "Lord, not my will but thine be done." Strive not only to be content, but to rejoice in every thing that mortifies your corrupt nature: hourly reflect that you are a fallen creature, sent into this world for no other end than to be restored to that nature which our first father lost, and so be made fit for the kingdom of heaven. Remember that Christ died for you, that you might live wholly to him; and the more you do this, the more you will certainly have of that peace which passeth all understanding.

I am your ever affectionate friend,

Sept. 16. 1755.

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LETTER XXXVIII.

My dear Friend,

I HAVE read Mr B.'s letter, and think it exceeding pretty; the style is easy and flowing, the language soft and affecting, the sentiments he expresses, in regard to his friend and yourself very beautiful: but what is all this to the purpose? or how can this convince you that you ought to give up those means of grace which you have found so extremely beneficial to your soul, in order to make a proper wife for Mr C.? It is true there are several assertions in Mr B.'s letter, designed to shew the reasonableness of your making the promise; but asserting and proving are different things. Whatever has the appearance of

argument in this letter, may, I imagine, be reduced to these heads : 1st, That it is absolutely wrong for any member of the church of England to attend the meetings of separatists. 2^{dly}, That in the church of England, a soul may find every thing necessary for its attaining the highest degrees of faith and holiness. 3^{dly}, That Mr M. is a separatist : and, 4^{thly}, That your having any acquaintance with him will hurt Mr C. both in his temporal interest, and in his character as a minister.—The opinion I had conceived of Mr B. was very high, I imagined him actuated by that spirit of *universal love*, which is the first and ruling principle of every soul that is born of God ; and I make no doubt but this is his real character : however (in this affair) he may seem to incline to a *partial selfish* orthodoxy. Could the church of England be proved to be the *only church* of Christ, there might be some reason for the cry of schism which we hear so much of : but what is she more than one of the most unexceptionable of those many divisions into which the universal church is broken ? And therefore a separation from her, though causeless, or from mistaken motives, cannot properly be called making a schism in the *church* of Christ. For my part (but I speak it with submission to Mr B.'s judgement) I apprehend that the only real and dangerous schism is the want of that spirit of love, which makes us rejoice in whatever is good and excellent in people of all denominations, and ready to receive good even of those who must differ from us in ceremonies and opinion. And why a person of this spirit (suppose one in communion with the church of England) may not be allowed sometimes to hear a minister among the Presbyterians, or any other sect, if they find this minister's preaching blest to their souls, I cannot imagine. What St Paul says, in regard to giving offence to weak brethren,

is often quoted to prove what it has nothing to do with ; for St Paul surely does not mean that he neglected those things which were profitable to his soul, for fear of giving offence to the weak, but that he refrained from outward things (such as making difference in meats, &c.) which he, as strong in faith, knew to be wholly indifferent, lest his example should tempt those who were weak to do things by which their consciences might be wounded.—As to Mr B.'s second argument, *in one sense* of it, I heartily agree with him ; the homilies, the articles, and liturgy of the church of England, doubtless do contain all the doctrines necessary to faith and holiness. But alas, how little are these doctrines regarded either in preaching or practice by the generality of her ministers ! Let any one who has the least degree of seriousness look round the churches of London, will he not see the people, for the most part, repeating an excellent sett of prayers, just as a parrot repeats a song ; and the minister giving forth doctrines from the pulpit, as directly contrary to those prayers as darkness is to light. This is so plain a matter of fact that it cannot be contradicted ; and it is as notorious, that whenever any minister in the church of England begins to preach her *real* doctrines, and live up to her precepts, he is immediately called a Methodist. This name is given to him as a reproach, but as it comes upon him for speaking the truth, it is in fact a glory. Ever since Christ was upon the earth, real Christians have had a nickname : but surely no one who is sincerely bent to follow him can regard this : I doubt not but Mr B. himself is called a Methodist.—But I now come to Mr B.'s third argument, that most dreadful charge laid against Mr M. that *he is a separatist*. This charge has been repeated over and over again, but has never yet been clearly proved.

If four walls, with a steeple and bells, was the church of England, Mr M. might with some shadow of reason be said to have separated from it, because he seldom preaches in these places : but this is no fault of his, for he will gladly preach in any of them, when their respective ministers will let him : and he was never denied preaching in what is called a church, till he strongly insisted on *that doctrine* for which the martyrs of the Reformation laid down their lives, and which is the very fundamental doctrine of the church of England, *justification by faith*. Any one who would read Mr M.'s appeals with a sincere and impartial spirit, would, I believe, be fully convinced that this charge against him could not stand.—As to the hurt your being acquainted with Mr M. might do to Mr C. in his temporal interest, it depends entirely upon himself. If he preaches to his people *smooth things*, and prophesies *deceits*, if he joins with them in their *innocent amusements*, and thereby lulls souls asleep, and keeps them in an utter ignorance of their *fall* and their *redemption*, till they awake in a miserable eternity ; go *you* where you will, not a dog will move its tongue against him, nor will the generosity of his parishioners be in the least abated towards him ; and all they say of him will only be, Poor man ! what a pity that such a good-natured good sort of a man should have such a sad wife. But do I think Mr C. will act in this manner ? No, certainly I do not. I verily believe, from what you yourself have said of him, that he intends to prove himself a true minister of Christ, that he will *boldly* and *earnestly* call sinners to repentance, and that his life and conversation will be wholly agreeable to his preaching : and if this is the case, though you were never to see Mr. M. again, Mr C. would be called a Methodist, the greatest part of his parishioners would cry out against him,

and in all probability their generosity towards him would greatly decrease. So that, consider the affair in what light you will, your being acquainted with Mr M. cannot materially hurt Mr C. And as to the objection of this acquaintance casting a reproach on your husband's ministry, it is quite needless: for it is not to be supposed, if Mr C. be the man you can approve of for a husband, that you will leave his church when he himself preaches, to go after any other minister; and whatever you do at this time, at proper opportunities, you will, I doubt not, be so guided by *Christian* prudence, that he as a good and pious man cannot reasonably object to it. But at present you and Mr C. know very little of each other, and he certainly had no right to propose such terms as these to you, till he had given you frequent opportunities of judging whether his heart and sentiments were such as you could entirely approve of. For my part, by the little I can judge in this affair, I believe him to be a good and sincere man, and I heartily wish him happy, and *that with you*, if it can be brought about without your doing any thing to wound your conscience. In the mean time, whether this affair is concluded upon or not, frequent conversing together in the spirit of Christianity may be a blessing to both: and how is it possible for you to give a direct answer to a man, till you are in some measure acquainted with him, and can judge of his temper and dispositions? I was quite delighted with the softness and affection for you with which your father mentioned this affair to me last night: if you say any thing of my writing to you, give my respects to him and your mother, with love to Miss B. and believe me

Your faithful

LETTER XXXIX.

To Mr * * * *.

*My dear * * * *,*

JOIN with me in praising the free grace and mercy of God, which has so wonderfully displayed itself in your soul! I do not know whether your letter most astonished or delighted me: but of this I am sure, that I do not know how enough to express my thankfulness to God in your behalf. The means so weak too! Nothing but a book put into your hands, which thousands might have read without regarding it. No examples of vital religion, no one to urge or encourage you to seek redemption! But the Almighty can indeed work by the weakest means and the poorest instruments; nothing is too hard for the Lord: and O may he perfect the work he has begun! O gracious and ever-blessed Redeemer, continue thy mercy to this brother of my soul: convince him more and more of the dreadful state he is in by nature, and the absolute necessity of justification by faith alone! O justify him freely; grant him redemption through thy blood the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of thy grace! Fill him with all peace and joy in believing, and give him to go on in thy strength, till he arrives at that fulness of faith here, and in the end to that eternal glory hereafter, which thou hast purchased for those who love thee! *Amen, Amen.*

I rejoice in your desiring to receive the sacrament. The only preparation required of us is repentance, faith, and love——love to God and all mankind. I would advise you to read immediately Mr Law's

Answer to the Plain Account, &c. of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper : this will explain the nature of this blessed ordinance to you better than any book I know of. I have written out a little catalogue of books which I make my constant study, and which I hope will be yours, always remembering, that the Bible is to be esteemed by us infinitely beyond any human compositions, let them be ever so excellent. Other books I shall occasionally recommend to you, as they benefit my own mind, or are proper for the state of yours.—As to forms of prayer in your private devotions, you have no occasion for them, nay, they would only be a means of keeping back your soul in its progress towards the spiritual life, the life which is hid with Christ in God. Pray from your own heart. There is no need of elegance of expression, or connection, to make a prayer acceptable to God. The desire of the heart is its prayer; and that sincerely turned to God, will certainly receive an answer of peace. When you first awake, strive to fix your mind immediately on God : let the first book you open be the New Testament, there read, not several chapters, but just so much as you find will be food sufficient for present meditation. If the first verse you read particularly affects you, do not dissipate the idea by reading further, but close the book, and let that verse have its full effect on your mind. When you fall on your knees before the Almighty, recollect the dangers and temptations you are most likely to fall into that day, and particularly pray to be kept by the grace of God in each of them. Earnestly pray for power over the sin which most easily besets you. But, above all things, strive in your morning and evening prayers to gain the most lively sense of your own nothingness, nay, to feel that you are even worse than nothing, that you are by your fallen nature sold under

sin, and deserving nothing at the hand of God but eternal punishment ; and when your mind is deeply impressed with this consideration, then look to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. There see the power by which your fallen nature may be restored ; there see the blood by which you are cleansed from all sin : there see the full redemption purchased for you, and strain every faculty of your soul eagerly to lay hold on this redemption : and be assured, that the eternal Spirit of God will assist you in these your prayers. The Spirit itself, saith St Paul, maketh intercession for us. In the course of the ensuing day, and, in all occurrences, strive to keep your heart in a state of prayer, always ready to be lifted up to God ; and this, even in the hurry of business, may be done, and no one be sensible of it except yourself. And be sure, my dear, never to omit making use of any opportunity of doing good which falls in your way, either to the bodies or souls of your fellow-creatures.—At night follow the same rule as in the morning ; only examining, before you beg the protection of God for the night, every action of the past day : what good you have done, what left undone, what faults you have been guilty of, what mercies you have received, and accordingly address yourself to the Father of mercy.

I have time to say no more at present. Continue to write me, and fail not to pray for

Your ever affectionate

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December 22. 1753.

LETTER XL.

January 7. 1754.

I RETURN my dearest *** thanks for his last letter: the satisfaction which it and the conversation we had together on Saturday gave me is inexpressible. O may you, by the assisting grace of God, continue in the happy way you are now in, and still press forward to higher degrees of faith and love. But, my dear, you must not think too highly of me: I am one of the most unworthy objects of the free mercy of God. I stand perhaps, more in need of your prayers than you of mine: you must *too* pray for me, and we must both strive to increase and strengthen each other. I should be glad to know whether you, last night, notwithstanding the disagreeable manner of the preacher, received any comfort and satisfaction from what he said: I own I did: his words (under all these disadvantages) raised and strengthened *me* in a remarkable manner: I wish it had been the same with you all; but your expectations were so highly raised by the name of ***, that an angel would hardly have satisfied them: and thus shall we be always disappointed, if we look more at man than God. The most famous preacher, let his eloquence, his manner, his doctrine be ever so near perfection, can never make the soul taste the words of salvation, unless the Spirit of God accompanies and enforces his preaching. And the same blessed Spirit can make the words of the meanest, the most despicable, the most disagreeable preacher of the gospel, effectually to awaken, to convince, and to comfort. But, in order to our reaping these benefits, we must hear with *sincerity* and with *single-*

ness of intention; not seeking to have our outward ears and eyes delighted, but desiring the *sincere* milk of the word, to nourish and strengthen our souls. Would it not be the highest madness to throw away *the water of life*, because it was brought to us in an earthen vessel? Solomon says, "To the *hungry soul* every *"bitter thing is sweet."* So to the soul which really *hungers* and *thirsts* after Christ and his righteousness, the sound of the *gospel of peace* (let the voice which proclaims it be *harsh* or *soft*) will be *sweet indeed*. O may you and I, my dear ***, always find it so to us! May that blessed Redeemer, in whom we have *peace*, be dearer to us than *light*, than *life*, than any thing we can form to our imagination either here or hereafter! In dangers, in difficulties, in temptations, may we still look to him as our defence, our deliverer, our strength. He is *all* in *all* throughout the oracles of God, both in the *Old* and *New Testament*: may he be *all* in *all* to our souls; may we walk by his *light*, conquer by his *strength*, and in the end be joyful partakers of that everlasting felicity which he has prepared for those that love him. This is the constant wish and prayer of

Your affectionate

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LETTER XLI.

Saturday the 17th.

I RECEIVED my dearest ***'s long letter, and have more and more reason *indeed* to be thankful to God on your account. O how my soul exults in your happiness, in your increase in faith, and love to Christ:—Your conversation with the Captain de-

lights me; no doubt but he rejoiced on your account, there you see the true Christian spirit. The advice he gave is excellent : O may we both be enabled to follow it ! Those who forsake all for Christ, will certainly find all in Christ.—As to ***, I would advise you to try first to raise in him a *desire* to receive the sacrament, before you persuade him to *receive* it : and be earnest at the throne of grace on his behalf. All probable means are to be made use of, but it is the Spirit of God alone who can convince of sin—I have been lately a good deal affected with the death of a lady in this neighbourhood, who led what is called an innocent life. Mr *** attended her, and all his endeavours to convince her were in vain : her answers were, “ Though she had not “ made such a shew of religion as *some others*, yet she “ had done her duty,” &c. This is the most fatal delusion of all, this blindness is the most dreadful state in which a soul can launch into eternity ! Can you and I be ever enough thankful to that God who has opened our eyes to see the things which make for our peace ? Was our whole life to be one continued act of praise, it would be nothing in comparison to the blessings we have received ; nay, even the eternity which we shall spend in continual *praise* is not enough *fully* to express all we owe to our *redeeming God*.—*Redemption*, how much is comprehended in this word ! and how sweet does it sound to a soul sensible of its wants ! May that pathetic prayer my dear *** has made for me be heard, then shall I experience that fulness of redemption for which I long ! Then shall I indeed be entirely dead to the world, and sin, and live only to Christ. All this unspeakable happiness I as sincerely wish to the brother of my soul as to myself ;

And am his truly affectionate

LETTER XLII.

Sunday Afternoon, March 10. 1754.

My dear ***,

LAST night, after you were gone, I read your letter, and thought of what you had told me with the greatest satisfaction: what reason have you to be thankful, that God should at so early a time of your life convince you of *sin*, and give you to *know* that you have redemption through Christ! How might you have plunged into all the follies and vices of youth, and laid up a large stock for future and bitter repentance, had not the free and unbounded grace of God displayed its power in your soul! O continue earnestly to seek still more and more of the fulness of Christ. Think not, because you have had a sense of the pardoning love of God, that you are to *rest here*; no, still seek for fresh evidences of his love to your soul; press forward with unwearied diligence towards the mark of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus; seek and strive to gain the *abiding witness* of the Spirit; strive for that perfect renewal of heart, by which you may say, "It is no more I that live, but Christ liveth *in me*."—You tell me you were assaulted some days after you had this clear sense of the mercies of God in Christ Jesus with doubts and fears. Whenever you are attacked in this manner again, argue thus with yourself:—
 "This peace and joy which I felt, this sense of forgiveness *seemed* to me to be the work of God upon my soul. But was it really so? Might not a warm imagination deceive me, or might not the great enemy of souls transform himself into an angel of light, in order to lull me into a fatal securi-

“ ty ? But have I not an infallible rule to judge by,
 “ whether this work was of God ? What were the
 “ fruits it produced ? Did I upon this grow more
 “ careless and remiss ? Was my mind puffed up with
 “ spiritual pride ? Did I allow myself liberties which
 “ before I was afraid to take ? — Or did I, on the
 “ contrary, watch still more diligently against the
 “ most distant approaches of sin ? Did I find in-
 “ creasing power over sins of the heart, as well as
 “ outward sin ? Did I find in me a *still* deeper sense
 “ of my own nothingness, and the all-sufficiency of
 “ my Redeemer, and a large increase of the love of
 “ God and all mankind ? If these were the happy
 “ fruits of this evidence, I have no cause to doubt
 “ this work was *certainly* of God.”

In this manner, my dear, if you will examine yourself, begging the assistance of the blessed Spirit to enable you to search every winding and turning of your heart, you can never be deceived, and will always be able by the shield of faith to repel all the fiery darts of the devil. I thank you for your affectionate prayer for me (may God return all those blessings double on your own head) ; and am

Your ever affectionate friend,

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LETTER XLIII.

I DID not expect to see my dear *** on Saturday, for the weather was so extremely bad, that I thought you would make the best of your way to ***. I have read your letter with great pleasure, and hope you will continue thus diligently to examine the state of your own mind ; and that on every examination you

will find an increase of that "treasure which never fail-
 "eth." I rejoice that you have been happy enough
 to suffer reproach for the sake of Christ, and more
 especially for the grace given you to *suffer joyfully*.
 You may depend upon it, that there is the same real
 distinction between Christians and the world now,
 that there was when our blessed Master said, "Be-
 "cause ye are not of the world, therefore the world
 "hateth you." And how ought our hearts to ex-
 ult with praise and thanksgiving when we can say,
we are not of the world! What unspeakable hap-
 piness will it be for us to be found (when our Re-
 deemer comes to judgement) among those who
 were not ashamed of him in this "adulterous and
 "perverse generation!" Is any thing too much
 to suffer when animated by the hopes of having
 these glorious words addressed to us, "Come, ye
 "blessed," &c.

I am now with my aunt ***, who is in great
 affliction for the loss of poor Mrs C. See, my dear
 ***, how little all that is esteemed in this world
 avails, when God is pleased to lay his hand upon us!
 Here was youth, beauty, riches, friends; but how,
 as in a moment, was the possessor of all these cut off!
 and by a dreadful disease brought to be the compa-
 nion of loathsome worms! Alas, how is that sweet
 smile which once sat upon her countenance, now
 changed to ghastliness! How are her fine features
 and delicate complexion now become even horrible
 to behold! O that some proud beauty would here
 stop and consider what she herself must one day as-
 suredly be! And O that this thought might strike me
 still with deeper seriousness, that she who was my
 friend and confidant even from my earliest youth,—
 she whom I loved with more than a sister's tender-
 ness, is now—alas, where is now her precious
 soul? Dearest Redeemer, thy grace is all-sufficient,

and thy mercies infinite ! Is it not now rejoicing with thee ? Were not all those helps afforded her by thy boundless love, which even to the last her ill-judging friends denied her ? O had I but seen her rejoicing in the love of God, and filled with the prospects of a blessed eternity, how would my soul have rejoiced in her departure ? How would my heart have dilated with the glorious thought, that my friend was delivered from the gilded snares that surrounded her, and gone to sure and unbounded happiness ! And even now I cannot doubt the mercies of my God : surely we shall meet again, and join in eternal praises to the great Author of our salvation !

I am with all affection your faithful friend,

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LETTER XLIV.

*My dearest ***,*

I AM obliged to you for your letter, though the first side of it frightened me extremely. I have been so accustomed to see you strong in faith, and rejoicing in God, that the very mention of weak faith alarmed me ; but thanks be to God, who has not suffered you to be tempted above what you were able to bear, but has with the temptation also made a way for you to escape : and I hope this trial will be a means of making you still more watchful. You have need to watch and pray always, and more especially at those times when your enemies seem to be at peace with you. When we are blessed with the light of God's countenance, and have power over the sin which most easily besets us, we are very apt to be off

our guard ; and, by being secure, we lay ourselves open to danger from that grand tempter, who is always watching over us for evil : and if we do not take care to keep the *loving eye* of our mind constantly fixed on that God who is always watching over us for good, we must fall. Here all our strength lies ; but God will not give us this strength unless we carefully and continually seek it : therefore, now that the free grace of God has again raised you up, be doubly careful in every thought, word, and action, and be assured, that your merciful Redeemer will be ever ready to hear you when you call upon him. That his love may daily abound in your heart more and more, is the sincere prayer of

Your affectionate

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July 12. 1754.

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LETTER XLV.

Monday, Aug. 5. 1754.

*My dear ***,*

You are indeed a great stranger : sure you might contrive to call, though it were but for half an hour. I am glad you heard Mr *** ; for to *hear him* and to *profit*, to a *sincere* soul, is the same thing. I thank God too, that you are in so happy a state of mind, and your soul so charmingly alive to God ; that you seem so much in love with holiness, and so eagerly pressing after it in all its branches : depend upon it, for every degree of holiness you gain here, you will also gain a new degree of happiness both *here* and *hereafter*. The nearer the soul is to the image of Christ, the more it will love him, and the more it

will be loved by him, and by the Father through him: and this love is the highest felicity both of saints and angels. Imperfect (in degree) as it is here below, the soul that tastes it would not change it for all that earth or heaven could give. And what then must it be above in the kingdom of eternal glory! where the soul, delivered from this earthly clog, will have no hindrances or obstructions to the pure love of God, but will be wholly swallowed up in it.

Your *** gave me an account of your yesterday's conversation. I congratulate you that you can so boldly and judiciously speak for the truth. I pray God to increase you in every good word and work; and am

Your ever affectionate friend,

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LETTER XLVI.

*My dearest ***,*

I RETURN you many thanks for your letter. Just before I received it I was thinking of you, and, to tell you the truth, with some fear (occasioned by your long absence), either that you were grown cold to me, or, what was infinitely worse, were grown cold to the ways of God. But your letter dispelled all my fears, and I rejoice and give thanks to our heavenly Father for his great and manifold mercies to your soul!—I wish I could have seen you often alone in your last illness, but that you know was impossible: however the small time I was with you gave me the utmost satisfaction, and I cannot be enough sensible of the goodness of my God, that I (weak and unworthy as I am) should be made an in-

strument of such increase of comfort to you. Had you then died, you would doubtless now be singing praises to God and the Lamb; but as you are suffered to continue longer upon earth, it is to this end, that you should approve yourself a faithful servant to God, in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation, that you should shine as a light in the world, and, by spending yourself in the service of God here, increase your capacity of happiness hereafter. God is merciful to you in a peculiar manner. To be kept as you are, when so much engaged in business, and with so few opportunities of attending the means of grace, calls for the utmost gratitude; therefore let no occasion pass of shewing your love to that Redeemer, who has thus saved you from sin and the love of the world. All you can do is by far too small a return for such unbounded goodness. Your present state of mind is a glorious and happy one indeed; but suffer not yourself to be off your watch for one moment, for Satan is always watching to hurt a soul that is thus happily escaped from his snare. But your certain help lies in Christ: keep therefore the eye of the mind fixed upon him, and you will still go on conquering and to conquer.

I am your ever affectionate friend,

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Sunday, Dec. 8. 1754.

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LETTER XLVII.

*My dear ***,*

I AM delighted with the rules you have laid for your conduct: you must constantly look up to God

for grace and strength faithfully to practise them. I rejoice in your love to your Redeemer ; and be assured, the longer you live, the more you will be convinced that this is your only sure refuge and lasting happiness. In regard to your going so often to ***, take the following advice : Shun, as you would poison, every thing that you find a means of making you less alive to God. Life is short. We have a great work to do, and God only knows how few of those hours, which are ever on the wing, may be given us to do it in. Therefore lose not a moment. Remember a Christian cannot stand still ; he must go either forwards or backwards ; and if you have not made some advances toward heaven since the clock struck last, you have gone back towards the contrary road. Keep this constantly in your mind, particularly in your *visits*.—May the peace and love of God be ever with you, and fail not to remember, at the throne of grace,

Your ever affectionate friend,

Nov. 27. 1755.

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LETTER XLVIII.

To Miss ****.

Sunday Morning.

My dear Friend,

I HAVE just time enough to wish that your soul may this day prosper, and that God may be found by you in all his ordinances. O that his love may be more and more shed abroad in your heart ! And this it certainly will be, if you walk closely with him, and suffer not your imagination to lead you from

your only true happiness. O strive continually after a constant recollection, and communion with God.—I know the unprofitable manner in which you will be employed this afternoon ; but this need not hinder your heart from being with your Saviour, he will support and comfort you.—Take care that you run not into making observations, either on the persons, manners, or dress of your visitors : four young ladies in a house together, are in the utmost danger from this sin ; and, depend upon it, it is as contrary to Christian love as lying or stealing. Adieu.

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LETTER XLIX.

My dear Friend,

I HAVE been thinking, since I saw you, of all the snares to which you are going to be exposed, and I sincerely pray that God may protect you in every danger, and hold up your goings in *his paths*. But in order to gain his gracious protection, you must take the greatest care that you do nothing to grieve his blessed Spirit, and cause him to depart from you. And this any sinful compliance will certainly do : therefore when you are desired to do any thing unbecoming a Christian, fear not (young as you are) to bear your testimony for God against an evil world. But do it in the spirit of meekness ; and if by this means you draw upon yourself the appellations of whimsical, obstinate, and ridiculous, look upon the reproach as matter of rejoicing, and as adding a greater lustre to the crown you will hereafter receive.—There is one temptation, which, at your age, is peculiarly dangerous, and that is, a desire of being thought handsome. You must be ever on your

guard against this ; for it will raise a thousand tempers in your soul, as contrary to the mind which was in Christ as darkness is to light. There is nothing which is a greater counter-poison to this desire, than bringing the mind to be contented, nay, even to rejoice, that another should outshine us. Let Miss J. be the means by which you acquire a conquest over this first born of female pride : set yourself every day to take delight in her beauty, to wish for its embellishment, and to be most pleased when she appears to the greatest advantage.—If, when you read this, you colour, and cry, “ Dear ! what can she mean ! This “ is vastly odd ! ”—Depend upon it, there is something in your heart which makes the advice I have given highly necessary ; and fail not, as you prize your peace of mind and increase of grace, to put it in practice. We should enjoy much more of the light of God’s countenance, and of that peace which passeth all understanding, if we would attend to, and watch against, those occasions of falling, which, from their commonness, we are apt to call *little*.—A soul is often cast into heaviness for hours, by an unguarded word.—You will not, my love, be angry with me that I deal thus freely with you : I watch over your soul in tender love ; and though sensible of my own unworthiness, either to advise or persuade ; though sensible of my own great and manifold sins and imperfections, I cannot desist from guarding you against all that may hinder your being made perfect in the love of God. I am

Your ever affectionate,

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Nov. 30. 1754.

LETTER L.

I THANK you, my love, for writing me, and rejoice that you are happy. God never fails to hear those that call upon him, and is gracious above all that we can either ask or think. As to my illness, it is extremely troublesome, but, I believe, not dangerous; and I must continue to bear it for a good while longer, without attempting to remove it, because my apothecary himself knows not what to make of it: However, I am just as I ought to be: I delight to do and to suffer the will of God, and his mercies are sweet to my soul. I am in that happy state of resignation, that I have not a wish, but for an increase of grace and holiness. On Sunday my soul longed after the sacrament, and the tears came in my eyes, because I could not go to church. But are the flowing streams of redeeming love confined to place or time? I found indeed they were not; for my soul was at home sweetly replenished with every blessing I could have hoped for at the altar. How much are those to be pitied who know not the love of God! How much are those to be pitied who set their hearts on any thing in this state of existence! How poor, how low, how trifling is every thing, that does not look towards eternity! I have such an experimental sense of the nothingness of all worldly things, that they seem no more to me than dancing puppets: and I am sometimes ready to affront my brother and Mr ***, by smiling at the important air with which they talk of their *business*, as they call it. I think there is very little probability that I shall be fit to come to the wedding. Pray God to keep your sister's heart in this time of danger and distraction,

Jan. 7. 1755.

To the REV. MR * * * *.

YOUR character for candour and piety takes from me all fear that you should be offended at the address of a person unknown, *even* though this address is designed to point out something amiss in you ; which it is absolutely necessary (for the good of your own soul, and for the eternal welfare of those who hear you) that you should amend.—You *believe!*—You *feel* the power, and live the life of *faith!*——O why will you not strive that others may be partakers of like happiness with you?——I know your general manner of preaching : I myself have heard you ; and while my ear has been delighted with your affecting delivery, your elegant language, and well-turned periods, my heart has *bled* to think that *such talents* should be so miserably perverted : *bled* for you and for those *poor souls* whom this way of preaching lulls into a fatal security. Pardon my freedom of speech ; pardon my boldness towards you ; but you yourself will acknowledge, that where the foundation is unsound, the building must fall ; and no true foundation can be laid except Jesus Christ. Your own experience must tell you that a divine power can alone change the heart ; that all outward regularity of behaviour, all rounds and

forms of devotion, and all moral duties, without this change, are utterly unavailing, and only like beautifying the outside of a sepulchre, which within is full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. *You* are sensible too, that faith in a dying Redeemer is the only means given us by which this change of heart can be effected. To what purpose, then, is it to tell *poor, lost, undone* man of the *dignity* of his *rational* nature, and the beauty of *virtue*?—Dear Sir, for the sake of that God whom you love and adore, *away* with these *shadows*, and substitute in their places realities. How would it delight the heart of several of your friends, (who greatly love and esteem you, and who wish well to the gospel of Christ), to see you, with all the force of eloquence, labouring to convince your hearers of the *sin* of their nature, their condemnation in the sight of God, and their utter incapacity to help *themselves*; and then proclaiming to them, “Behold the *Lamb of God*, who taketh away the *sins* of the *world*?”

I am sensible of the difficulties you will have to encounter in thus changing your manner of preaching: but though the battle be hard to fight, great will be the glory of the victory. It is true, your enemies are strong and powerful; the devil, the world, all the wicked, and all the self-righteous will be joined together against you; but look up with an eye of faith, and see how many more are for you. Think of the holy angels rejoicing over every sinner converted by your means: think that the Captain of your salvation, your God and Redeemer, will be ever near to help, to strengthen, and comfort you! And consider what unutterable joy your soul will feel, when at that period of time which is the most delightful to the true Christian, you can with firm confidence cry out with St Paul, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I

"have kept the faith : henceforth is laid up for me a
"crown of righteousness."

I am (though your unknown and unworthy)

Your truly affectionate Friend.

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L E T T E R LII.

To MR G * * *

I AM much obliged to you for your letter to me; and if it will increase your joy to know that I love my Saviour more than *health*, or *light*, or *life*, be assured that I do; and that I should think myself the most ungrateful and vile of all creatures if I did not. It is my constant and earnest desire every day, nay every hour, to increase in the knowledge and love of God, and to be saved not only from the guilt, but also from the power of sin. I know that the grace of God through Christ is sufficient for me: I know that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin; and I know (blessed be God for giving me that knowledge) that I have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of my sins. Think now what a wretch I should be, if I did not love this Redeemer, and if I did not wish above all things to be conformed to his image?—And in consequence of my thus loving God, because he first loved me, I love every creature which God has made, and every soul of man, without any regard to sects, names, or parties. The Moravian church, though I am certain at this time it is over-run with *dreadful errors*, I love, pity, and pray for. O may the God of love and unbounded mercy convince and restore it!—I thank you for the glorious advice you give me, of

"living very near the cross:" there is life indeed! Life freely given to every soul that seeks it. And that you and I may ever partake of this life, is the hearty wish of your

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LETTER LIII.

To the REV. MR * * * *.

November 30. 1755.

Dear Sir,

I AM much obliged to you for your apostolical letter, and for the truly Christian joy you express for my child's happiness. That I have felt all that the greatest sensibility of temper is capable of feeling on such an occasion is certain: but here has been my great comfort, that in every thing which concerned the child, I have had neither will nor wish of my own. He was peculiarly dedicated to God, even before he was born; and, since he has been daily, nay, almost hourly offered up, and that not in word only, but in truth; and as it has pleased God to accept him as a sacrifice, rather than as a servant, I have nothing to say, but "thy will be done!" If I could have seen you, or any of my Christian friends at this time, when all the finest springs of human nature were on the rack, it would have been a great satisfaction: but it pleased God to withhold all creature comfort from me; and though his own arm sustained me, it was in a manner not sensibly perceived by my soul: so that I had the great blessing of bearing something of the *cross*. And this I look upon to be a particular blessing to me, because I have been so

wholly led by love, that, before this, I knew but very little of what it was to suffer the will of God. In short, every dispensation of my heavenly Father towards me is nothing but mercy and unbounded goodness. I *see* and I *adore*.—The Lord Jesus bless and preserve you in body, soul, and spirit. Fail not to pray for

Your obliged and affectionate

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LETTER LIV.

Monday, December 22. 1755.

Dear Sir,

I SEE, with delight, that you are *set up* as a mark, for every one of the devil's tools to shoot at: and he certainly wounds the deepest by those, who, while they are working for him, imagine they are doing God service, and acting with *Christian prudence*. How often is *that wisdom* which comes from *beneath* taken for that which comes from *above*! And *fear* of man, *secret* desire of preferment, and being ashamed of the *cross* of *Christ*, dignified with the title of true *discretion*, and caution not to give offence!—It is hard indeed, to be wounded in the house of your friends; nothing, perhaps, is more painful to nature: but if they have called the master of the house *Beelzebub*, how much more those of his household!—Those servants of *Christ* who are designed by him for *eminent usefulness*, must of necessity have the largest share of tribulation: for the highest place of honour under *our King*, is that of the sharpest sufferings. I should not wonder if the tongues and pens of all your brethren (except

two or three), were employed against you; and I am so far from being sorry (on your account) for Mr L.'s preaching against you, that I look upon it as a *precious* and *blessed* mark, and a *seal* to the truth of your ministry.—Happy parting, indeed, with the world! And happy parting with every comfort in it, if nearer union with God is the consequence! O cease not to pray for me, that all things may *thus* work together for my good?—This poor dream of life will soon be at an end; and *then*, if those who have only given a cup of cold water for the sake of Christ shall not lose their reward, what an exceeding and eternal weight of glory attends those happy souls who constantly labour and patiently suffer for *him*!

*I am your obliged and faithful
friend and servant,*

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LETTER LV.

To the REV. MR * * * *.

Sunday Afternoon, Oct. 13. 1754.

My dear Friend,

I WAS this morning (though unseen by you) present at your sermon on the *public* worship of God, and sat impatiently expecting and longing to hear that name mentioned, by which alone cometh salvation. Surely, thought I, when all his *heathen* and *moral* motives are done, I shall at last hear him urge that *best* and *most prevailing* motive to our joining together in the praise of God, the exceeding riches of

his mercy to us in Jesus Christ. But, alas! how were my expectations frustrated? And how did my heart sink when the sermon was ended?—If there is any faith to be given, either to the words or behaviour of man, you are a *Christian*. But what did you say *here*, more than Socrates might have said? You will pardon my boldness: God knows the sincerity of my heart, when I protest, that it is only from a motive of love to your soul, and the souls of those who hear you, that I write with such freedom. Give me leave then to ask, Have you, for your own soul in particular, found redemption through the blood of Christ? I have all the reason imaginable, from your sweet conversation, to believe that you have. But how is it then that you could preach *one* such sermon as this? O search well into your own heart. Is there not some root of bitterness remaining, some evil shame, which renders you thus inconsistent? Had I not heard you myself, I could not have thought it possible for you to have preached in this manner, after the glorious things you have said to me. You have called me friend. Take this letter as the highest proof of friendship I could possibly give you. Is it not so, for your sake to run the hazard of being thought *bold and assuming*? If you are offended, tell me so *plainly*, but at the same time *freely* forgive me; and believe me, with the sincerest wishes for your present usefulness and everlasting happiness,

Your ever obliged and affectionate Friend.

LETTER LVI.

To the REV. M. * * * *.

December 25. 1754.

Dear Sir,

MAY this blessed day, in which the Sun of righteousness first arose on our dark world, bring a new accession of light, and peace, and joy to *your* precious soul! May the power of God accompany every word you utter, and give you this day to enlarge your conquests over the prince of darkness! O give my full heart leave to expand itself in praying for you, in blessing you, and in thanking you, for your surprising goodness to me; no, never shall you find me ungrateful: *that* God in whom alone I trust for strength, will preserve me from falling into this *meanest* of all crimes.—I shall not I fear have the delightful satisfaction of hearing you to-morrow, and therefore could not forbear writing to-day; besides I am by illness prevented attending the public worship of God, so that I have need of this comfort. Every thing has succeeded here beyond my hopes; your presence has greatly dispelled every cloud of prejudice, and fear of man. In short, when I consider the goodness of God, and my own absolute unworthiness, I am lost in astonishment: dear Sir, pray that I may make a proper improvement of all these blessings, and particularly of that *exceeding* great blessing, your friendship. O Sir! may I *indeed* say *your* friendship? The Lord Jesus bless and reward you! Expression fails me when I would thank you as I ought, and tell how much I am

Your ever obliged and affectionate

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LETTER LVII.

Dear Sir,

YOUR answer to my question, on What is the proper foundation of rejoicing in temporal blessings, is perfectly satisfactory, and I thank you for it. What you say of Mr P.'s tract is just what I wanted: possibly some fit season may be given me to make a good use of it. One would imagine, that if singleness of eye and sincerity of heart were really found in all those of our ministers, who in a measure preach the gospel, there would scarce be room left even for the shadow of a dispute. But this is only imagination; for I cannot help observing of some, for whose sincerity I would answer with my life, that they are far from being consistent long together. I have lately been attacked with a mighty pretty distinction (and from my ignorance a new one to me), in respect of the doctrine of assurance of forgiveness of sin.—Mr *** says, it is of the *essence of faith*; but most of the old Puritans, together with a number of great names (of which I remember not one) say, it is of the *fruits of faith*.—A poor weak woman, who has not learnt logic, may be easily puzzled with the nicety of a logical distinction: but still I could plainly see, that let it be essence or fruits, there was a manifest necessity for enforcing the doctrine; because a tree which brings not forth its proper fruits, is a barren tree.—A faith which brings not forth its proper fruits, is a dead faith, and consequently unprofitable.—The answer is, “A tree may be “alive, and yet not bring forth fruit immediately.”—Well, but this makes nothing against the necessity there is that it *should* bring forth fruit, in order to make it a profitable tree.—But then we

have a homily to fly to :—"The homily on salvation says nothing of assurance."——If the homily contradicts St Paul, the homily is nothing to me.——"O you would not refer it to that, because it makes against you."——I do not so much as know what is in it.——"It only says a *sure trust and confidence*."——I think a *sure confidence* is nearly the same with assurance.——"No, they are very different."——Now, Sir, you must be so good to furnish me with two or three of your strong arguments, to pull down this Babel tower which *our friends* are building. I should also be glad if you would tell me by what happy art you are always *consistent* in doctrine, as well as practice ; for I can find no one else that is so.——Difference of opinion I regard not ; I could enjoy fellowship of spirit with every truly sincere Christian of whatever denomination. Inconsistency is the thing alone which hurts me. When I find this in people whom I know to be in so much higher state of grace than myself, and whom I love and honour, it disquiets me, I own, by far too much, and my soul, like Noah's dove, flies solitary about, and finds no place of rest on the face of the whole earth, till at last with one olive-leaf, and *only one*, she returns joyful to the ark.——Give me leave, Sir, to entreat of you (if you should have a little time to spare), that you will just point out to me, *1st*, What are the probable causes of this inconsistency in those who have *truly* sincerity of heart and singleness of eye. *2^{dly}*, What is the most probable means of curing this distemper of the mind. And, *3^{dly}*, How I may avoid falling into it myself, and keep my soul from being disquieted, when I find it in those whom I highly esteem.——I hope God continues to preserve to us your precious health, and that your long journies may be a means of strengthening and establishing it.—I doubt not but the work of the Lord prospers in your

hands, and that you will have much reason to rejoice in the fruit of your labours. How happy are you to be always thus employed, in such eminent service for your master? You live almost the life of an unembodied spirit; and I live nearly the life of a *plant*. But thank God, it is absolutely certain, that this immortal spirit of mine, which is thus pressed in on every side, and weighed down with matter, will some time burst its bonds, and break the bars of its prison; and then, how will it soar! Nothing sure can equal the life, the joy, the *glorious liberty*, which a spirit must feel, when first delivered from its heavy clog! Farewell. May our dear Redeemer continually watch over you, and bless you in every thought, word, and action!

I am, &c.

LETTER LVIII.

September 17.

Dear Sir,

How shall I find words to thank you for your sweet expressions of care and friendship for my soul? Ten thousand thousand blessings on your own for this kindness.—I hope I may in one sense say, that my soul prospers, because I desire nothing but that the will of God may be done in me and by me. But I have not at present those overflowings of joy I have at sometimes experienced: the cries of a sickly infant, which touch all the finest springs of human nature, cast a kind of heaviness over my soul; and the perpetual and strict watch I am obliged to keep over my heart, for fear the least murmuring or

complaining thought should arise in it (which I would rather die than suffer) seem rather to restrain my soul from the glorious freedom she once had, of losing herself in the heights and depths of divine love.—O blessed hours of abstraction from all creatures, and joyful communion with the fountain and centre of all happiness, when will ye return? When it is the will of my heavenly Father that you should return: and in that divine will I rest contented, willing, nay pleased, to suffer any thing, every thing, so I may be kept from sin. I have lately had inward temptations buzzing about my mind, like insects in a summer's day; but by looking to Jesus, I as easily disperse them, as the waving hand disperses those little troublesome animals: and, thanks to my Redeemer's boundless mercy, I still enjoy in my inmost soul a peace which I would not lose for millions of worlds. But I greatly want constant recollection, and a mortified humble spirit. You know the weight your words have with me: give me, I beg of you, some directions for obtaining this. I cannot take my leave, without thanking you again and again, for enquiring after my soul. O how dearly do I love you for this goodness! May the tender mercies of God be with you! May the eternal Comforter meet and bless you in every word of your tongue, and in every thought of your heart!

Your ever grateful and affectionate

LETTER LIX.

February 28.

I SHALL not forget the great reason I had to be thankful to God and you for our *last* conversation. It seemed to me, that I had more liberty of speaking to you than usual, though a thousand things were yet left unsaid; and you led me to make many observations, which I hope will be of lasting benefit to my soul. You have taught me to see the amazing wisdom and loving-kindness of God in several instances, which I should not else have thought of; and I am fully satisfied with all his disposals: knowing he orders all things well, I cheerfully submit; and I trust that strength will be given me to walk on in the way set before me, “though sorrowful, yet (in one sense) always rejoicing.”—Is it not a great blessing, that the thorns are mixed with roses? This is infinitely more than I deserve.—How true is it, that the higher satisfaction we have in any thing besides God, the greater pain must necessarily attend it? I have often been taught this lesson, in various degrees, each rising above the other; and yet I have not learned wisdom. And who shall teach me *this* wisdom? Why, you yourself can lay down most excellent rules, but it is God alone who can give me power to practise them. I plainly see the necessity of having every thought brought into subjection to Christ: it must be thus, if I would attain settled peace and constant recollection.—In your extract from Molinos, the state of mind I am seeking is well described in these words: “The soul that is entered
“into the heaven of peace, acknowledges itself full
“of God, and his supernatural gifts; because it

“ lives grounded in *pure love*, receiving equal pleasure in light and darkness, in night and day, in *affliction* and *consolation*: through this holy and heavenly *indifferency*, it never loses its peace in *adversity*, nor its tranquillity in *tribulation*, but sees itself full of unspeakable enjoyments.”——

And again, “Though the valley of the lower faculties of the soul, is suffering *tribulations*, *combats*, *martyrdoms*, and *suggestions*, yet, at the same time, on the lofty mountain of the higher part of the soul, the true sun casts its beams; it enflames and enlightens it, and so it becomes clear, peaceable, resplendent, quiet, serene, being a mere ocean of joy.”—But, alas! you will say, “How far are you from this state!” True, I am far from it indeed. And yet I have sometimes experienced some little glimmerings of it, but they have been soon disturbed: and then I have fondly said to myself, Well, when this trial, when this temptation or difficulty is over, I shall return to my sweet peace, and my soul will be wholly swallowed up in the love of God. Vain imagination! I think I have now *experimentally* learnt a truth, which before only floated in my brain, “That the peace of a Christian does not consist in being free from temptations and difficulties, but in stedfastly and calmly conquering them.”—Once more, the Lord preserve you! Could my prayers avail any thing, what blessings would you receive, in body, soul, and spirit! O farewell, farewell! And when your soul is most carried up to God, remember to pray for

Your grateful and affectionate

LETTER LX.

April 2.

Dear Sir,

I RETURN you many thanks for writing so soon, and particularly for filling *two* sides of your paper. My soul was as much enlivened by your letter, as the earth, the birds, and flowers, are by the rays of the sun, after a long and heavy rain. May your blessed Master reward you for all your goodness to me!

I thank God I have in some measure learned that grand lesson, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt;" and I continually pray, that he may teach it me more and more. The present idle and half-dying life I am obliged to lead, greatly needs this temper of mind; and it is all the free mercy of my Redeemer, that I can *now* say, his grace is sufficient for me.

In regard to temporal blessings, I have now and then a little dispute with some of my religious friends, and I want your authority to strengthen my arguments.—They say, Whatever temporal blessing God gives, you are to rejoice and take pleasure in it, as his gift. And I say, Whatever temporal blessing God bestows, the motive for your rejoicing should be *merely* the will of God: for if you rejoice in the blessing considered as a happiness in itself (though referring it to God with a thankful heart), you are building on the sand, and your happiness will be shaken, if not overturned, by the first storm that beats upon it. But if the will of God be the motive of your rejoicing, you build your happiness upon a foundation which never can be moved. The

present blessing, indeed, may vanish away, but your cause of rejoicing still remaineth sure and stedfast, in time and in eternity.—Some people think the way I am in at present a prodigious happiness, and the greatest of worldly blessings, and ask me, “Are you not pleased?”—I answer, I am pleased with every thing which is the will of God; and the answer is thought an odd one; but I cannot help it, I dare not make any other.

You want me to say something upon Christian love ripened in eternity: but this is a theme for angels; my soul is too low, too dull, to attempt to write upon it; I can only wish and pray to be a partaker of it. Farewell; may the sweetest streams of redeeming love ever fill your soul.

I am unalterably yours,

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LETTER LXI.

July 18.

Dear Sir,

I CAN truly say, that I would with joy devote all I have, and all I am to God, and gladly spend every hour in his service. But the difficulties I find in the way are indeed *insuperable* to me, though not so, I think, to every one, at least, if I may judge from some few instances I have seen since my acquaintance with you.—You yourself, *even outwardly*, appear to me to spend every hour to the glory of God; and for this reason I look upon you to be the happiest of mankind. When I see you spent with fatigue, your eyes half closed, and your outward man seeming to hasten to its dissolution, though I would

freely give my own life and strength to increase yours, I almost *envy* you this *glorious fatigue*, and say to myself, how happy, how blessed is this man, thus to *spend* and be *spent* in the service of his Redeemer! Think me not presumptuous when I say, that I place you constantly before my mind, as my *living* example. Outwardly it certainly is impossible for me to follow you, but inwardly!—O, Sir, that I could in every faculty of my *soul* be a follower of you, even as *you are* of *Christ*!—You bid me *love enough*: and, doubtless, if I could *love enough*, I should (as you say) do enough, for *perfect love is perfect liberty*, liberty to conquer all sin, and attain to all holiness. This is the glorious privilege of the children of God; and this my soul pants after. But though I can sincerely say, that I love God above all things, yet it is very evident that I do not love enough, because the fruits of this perfect love are not produced in my soul. Sometimes my enemies seem entirely conquered, and my mind is smooth and calm, as were the waters after Christ had said to them, *Peace, be still*. But when I seem thus strong, I am (to my inexpressible shame and confusion) found to be weakness itself: some trifle, which perhaps had appeared too contemptible even to be thought of, will be the means of my *inwardly* falling. But, thanks be to God, I have this given me,

“ *Quick as the apple of an eye,*

“ *The slightest touch of sin to feel.*”

To feel and immediately fly to that blood of sprinkling, which alone can cleanse me from this pollution. But indeed, Sir, I find every day more and more the truth of your words, “That I have need to watch always.” I am set, as it were, in the midst of snares, both friends and enemies conspi-

ring together to keep me from that humility which is so necessary to *one* who wishes to be *really* a Christian. My enemies lead to pride, by railing at me for what is, and *ought* to be, in one sense, my glory; and my friends, by having too high an opinion of me. I think there is none, except yourself, who do not in *some measure* hurt me: and therefore, though I dare not call you *my* friend, as implying any particular attachment on your part, you are in fact my truest and best friend. Praise I now dread as poison; and yet my temper is such, as makes some encouragement necessary. Your behaviour to me is exactly fitted to preserve the balance of my mind even; a smile of approbation from you, is *that praise* which encourages without endangering. You will pardon my speaking so much of myself! A patient, you know, must fully lay open his case to his physician; and I have been emboldened even by you yourself, to increase the length of my letters. O may your blessed Master reward you for all your labours in his service, and for all your goodness to

Your unworthy, though
ever grateful and affectionate,

MEDITATIONS

UPON SOME

TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

O My God, how fatally do I experience the truth of this assertion! My heart is indeed deceitful above all things: and how great is my sorrow on the melancholy reflection? Lord, I have, by the deceitfulness and wickedness of my own heart, justly forfeited my title to the joys of eternity, incurred thy indignation, and made myself obnoxious to that dreadful sentence, *Depart ye cursed!* And how just this sentence, after the crimes my deceitful heart has betrayed me into; after the many good resolutions I have broke, after the sins of ingratitude, presumption, and repining, with which I have defiled my soul! How often have I resolved, firmly resolved, to keep a strict watch over my eyes and heart in the house of God, and let no thought have entrance which could prevent my addressing my Creator with the reverence I ought? But, merciful God, how contrary have I acted to all this? Have not mine eyes been amused by vanity, and my heart

so distracted by idle and ridiculous ideas, that I have not known the words my lips pronounced? Nay, have not even unclean and blasphemous thoughts attacked me at this sacred time, and, wretch that I am! been indulged or but coldly rejected? Horrible proof that my heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked! Lord, I abhor myself, for having thus often, and thus heinously offended thee. I am utterly ashamed and confounded at my daring, my monstrous impiety. How shall I dare to hope for pardon of a sin so frequently repeated, and with such aggravations? When I consider the greatness of my guilt, my astonished soul is ready to sink into black despair. Blessed God! I sin against the clearest conviction, against the checks of my conscience, and the kind admonitions of thy Holy Spirit; and, strange perverseness! against all the hopes I have of happiness, sin against that God, whom I love and adore from my soul, and whose favour I would this moment lay down my life to procure. The thoughts of immortality, and the surprising goodness of the Almighty in the works of creation and redemption, fill my mind with gratitude and wonder: I am lost in admiration, and could dwell for ever on the delightful theme. And yet, inconsistent wretch that I am! I go on to offend this divine Author of my being, by my careless, supine, and irreverent addresses, and my wicked and fantastic thoughts. My prayers are turned into sin: and now is it not presumption, the highest presumption, to hope for pardon? Or rather, would it not be a greater sin than I have yet committed to despair of it? Is not mercy the darling attribute of God? It is; and I embrace and adore that mercy: that mercy which is so freely offered to the worst of sinners: that mercy which is made sure to us by the blood of a crucified Saviour. O my

only refuge ! my dearest hope and everlasting confidence ! teach me words to express the sentiments I have of thee, and the abhorrence I have of my guilt. I detest myself, hate my vile ingratitude, and am fully convinced of my own weakness, and the vanity of my best resolutions, without thy assisting grace : O grant me that, for the sake of my Redeemer : on that alone will I rely : never more will I trust to the strength of my own reason ; I have found, by dear experience, that I am folly and inconsistency itself : without thy aid I am worse than nothing, but with the blessing I implore, I shall be more than conqueror. But is the sin I have now been lamenting, the only instance of the wickedness and deceitfulness of my heart ? Alas ! it is not : I have innumerable proofs of its treachery ; every day, every hour brings some, and gives me new cause for grief and repentance. I resolve frequently no more to repine at the misfortunes I lie under ; no more to look back with discontent, or forward with distrust. And these resolutions I strengthen, by reflections on the wisdom of God : how much better he knows to choose for me, than I could for myself ; and how unavailing is impatience under ills I cannot prevent. Then I consider how small my punishment is, in comparison of what I deserve, and should suffer, was not the Almighty infinitely merciful ; and what blessings afflictions produce, when received with humility and resignation. And yet, after all this, how often do I catch my deceitful heart breathing an impious sigh, and by this secret complaint accusing Providence ! “ Why am I thus “ miserable ! Why, while I see all around me gay “ and prosperous, must I alone be unfortunate, and “ mourn without finding one to pity me ? What “ have I done to deserve being disappointed in “ every thing on which I have set my affections, and

“deceived by every friend I have trusted?”—With this surprising boldness have I dared to expostulate with my Maker; and yet his mercy still allows me life and time for repentance. O thou adorable Being, may I never more offend thee by a discontented word or thought: but grant that every faculty of my soul may be in perfect resignation to thy will; and by this resignation acquire that tranquillity and peace, which all the delights of the earth are not able to give.

Again, I resolve every day to be perfectly easy under every little mortification I may meet in the common occurrences of life. How weak (I cry) is it to be affected by the folly or ill-nature of the world? Why should I regard the sneers of people, whose low sentiments only deserve scorn and pity? Can the unreasonable and unjust notions of another rob me of any real merit? Can an envious, a malicious, or a detracting speech, do me any material injury, unless I give it force by my impatience and want of temper? No, certainly: nothing from without can hurt me, but by my own fault. A mind fortified with religion and philosophy is proof against the darts of senseless tattle, or ill-natured wit. Firm and collected within itself, it smiles superior, and looks down on the ignorant and the malicious with pity.—These reflections are just: and O that I could reduce them into practice! But here I miserably fail. After my soul is filled with these fine notions, and is ready to pronounce herself equal to every trial, she sinks in the most shameful manner. A word, a look, nay, the very appearance of a slight, throws me into the greatest uneasiness and confusion; and though I can govern my temper enough to hide it from the world, my heart is ready to burst with indignation. Strange weakness!—But why do I call it strange? Am I

not too well acquainted with the fatal cause of this, and almost every sin I am guilty of? It is vanity, that intolerable vanity, which mixes itself with all I do, or speak, or think. When I look strictly into my deceitful and wicked heart, I find it so full of this abominable vice, that I regard myself with horror and amazement; and yet, perhaps, the next moment indulge in airy schemes and self-complacency. Sure there is not in the whole universe so vain and sinful a wretch as I am. What can I hope for? What can I expect? Will not eternal rejection from the presence of God be justly my portion? O the thought of unutterable horror! My God! my only hope! can I think of being for ever cast out from the light of thy countenance, and live? Why does not the dreadful idea at once put an end to my being? All the torments of damnation are summed up in these shocking words,—Eternal rejection from thy presence! O gracious and adorable Being? let me not be thus beyond imagination cursed. In the name of my blessed Saviour, I implore thy pity! O look with compassion on a soul which pants for grace and forgiveness! a soul sensible of her weak and polluted state, and entirely relying on thy mercy! O speak peace to this troubled sea, and all shall be calm! Give me strength to resist those temptations I so often sink under! But above all, change this wicked and deceitful heart, and give me a new heart and a new spirit. Mortify in me all proud thoughts and vain opinions of myself, and let not the blessings thou hast bestowed upon me increase my condemnation, by being made motives for pride and vain-glory. Hear and grant my requests, O ever-merciful God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Redeemer. *Amen.*

1748.

*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.*

THESE, O compassionate Saviour, were thy words; this thy gracious call, and I obey it. I come unto thee, O thou light of the world! for rest, peace, and everlasting refreshment. Wearied with treading the paths of folly and vanity; wearied with deceitful hopes and idle fears, and all the gay delusions of this world, I come to thee for peace, and with full assurance of obtaining it: assurance founded on thy promises; those promises which are truth itself; merciful as thy own beneficent nature, and unalterable as thy being. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but thy word shall never fail. Encouraged by this word, I come: not even the reflection of my absolute unworthiness shall keep me from thee. It is to sinners that this heavenly call is addressed: sinners that labour under the heavy burden of their offence: and such am I. The miserable wretch who is chained to the oar is not more weary of his slavery, than I am of my sins; the sins which so easily beset me, and so often conquer my best resolutions. Every hour I have new reason to lament my weakness, and to confess that thy grace is my only refuge. O let that grace, which has kept me from all infamous crimes, be also my preservative against those sins of the mind, which, though hid from the short-sighted world, are all open to thee, and render my soul equally odious to the eye of Heaven. O save me from myself! from my own proud thoughts and vain affections! I come to thee, blessed Jesus, that I may have rest: O give me that rest! then shall all be perfect peace and harmony, and my soul shall feel no emotions but those of

This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

O GLORIOUS and ever transporting thought ! Sure and never failing remedy for all the troubles and disappointments of life !——Incorruption and immortality !——Let me dwell on the charming words ; they carry peace and everlasting joy in the sound. And yet how little can my soul understand of their full import, clogged by the weight of flesh and blood ? Darkened by this cloud of sin and error, what true idea can she form of incorruption ! But if the faint shadow and distant prospect affords such delight, what will the full enjoyment give ? Imagination is lost in the dazzling reflection. All the scenes of this lower world vanish as a mist before the sun ; and my elevated soul wholly absorbed in contemplation of those mighty blessings, seems to soar above the stars, and launch into the sea of eternity. My God ! My everlasting hope ! Great and adorable Creator of all things ! Where shall I find words expressive of my wonder, my joy, and gratitude ? Thy mercy, thy free and boundless mercy, from nothing called me into being, and made that being capable of an endless duration ; formed me for eternity ! And what raises the benefit infinitely higher, for an eternity of happiness. Not the united power of men and devils can deprive me of this without my own consent : and if I am miserable, I have no one to blame, except myself. O merciful

God ! I adore thee past all expression, and the notions I have of thy divine attributes inspire me with an unbounded confidence. Unworthy as I am of the least of all thy mercies, I cannot but hope for the greatest ; and in the midst of my continual offences, I look up to thee, as my friend, my only refuge, and constant benefactor. When I grieve for my sins, it is not from fear of punishment, but from the cutting reflection of my black ingratitude, in offending my Creator and Preserver, the God in whom I live, and move, and have my being ; the God to whom I owe infinitely more than I can conceive ; to whom I owe the glorious and the assured hopes of incorruption and immortality. And here again, O my soul, take wing, again lose thyself in the blissful prospect ! Think on the joy thou wilt feel when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption ; when this companion (which, in spite of the miseries it betrays thee into, is still dear and still too tenderly beloved) shall become, instead of a clog, or a prison, a vehicle pure and ethereal, perfectly fitted for all the purposes of thy enlarged faculties, and the completion of thy glory and happiness. O blessed and desirable re-union ! State of permanent delight, and never-fading joy ! With what rapture does the idea inspire my soul ! Fired by thoughts like these, I rise far above the most glorious prospects, earth, with all her boasted varieties, can give. Pleasures, riches, honours, what are ye all ? Emptiness and nothing — at the least glimpse of eternal day, how ye vanish into air ! Lost are all your shining toys ; your painted glories entirely lost ! And O may their deluding shadows never return to darken my soul ! May the God in whom I trust preserve me from all their temptations ; may his mercy ever protect and guide me, and bring me in the end to that state of incorruption and immortality which I hope for, through

THIS text is so strong a proof of the unreasonableness and folly of national or religious prejudices, that one would imagine it should entirely banish those odious and pernicious principles from the whole Christian world. But daily experience too plainly discovers the contrary; and the very people who would be thought to have the greatest zeal for the good of souls, are, of all others, the readiest to condemn those who dissent from them. It is a common, (though false) assertion of libertines, that priests of all religions are the same; but they might truly affirm that bigots of all religions are the same, equally destructive of the peace of their fellow-creatures, and the laws of civil society. What wild havock, what horrid scenes of blood and slaughter have been produced by mistaken zeal and blind prejudice? The histories of former times abound with shocking instances of this kind; and, strange inconsistency! the persecuted party have no sooner got the upper hand, but they have, with the power, assumed the spirit of their persecutors, and been guilty of the very acts of injustice they had so loudly exclaimed against. It is true, the degrees and kinds of persecution differ, according to the particular notions of the sects, or the particular laws of the states where it is practised; but persecution, in whatever shape or degree, is still persecution, and proceeds from that

spirit of prejudice and bigotry, which makes us look on God as a respecter of persons, and on all those who differ from us as his enemies, and consequently, deserving nothing at our hands but contempt and cruelty. Thus the furious *Roman Catholic* brands with the name of heretic, all who are without the pale of his church, pursues them with fire and sword in this world, and sentences them to eternal punishment in the next : and the hot-headed nominal Protestant, with the greatest vehemence, expatiates on the sin of idolatry, and other errors of the *Romish* church, without ever supposing he, or the party he is connected with, have any share in such crimes, while even he stands in need of chastisement for committing those sins he condemns in others. Nay, the bigots of even the little trifling sects into which the reformed religion is subdivided, wholly appropriate to those of their own denomination, the title of God's church, and God's chosen.—Surprising narrowness of soul ! Worse than *Jewish* stupidity ! they had some excuse for their arrogance : the particular manner in which Providence had distinguished them from the rest of the world, seemed to be some foundation for their pride to build on ; and it is not to be wondered that the dark shadow of the law should obscure the principle of universal benevolence. But that people under the glorious dispensation of the gospel, men who pretend to be followers of that Jesus, whose whole life was a scene of moderation and charity, who laid down his life for his enemies, and prayed for his murderers : in a word, that Christians should despise, hate, and persecute their fellow Christians, is a consideration equally melancholy and amazing ! Mistaken men ! Is then the great Creator of the universe, the preserver of all his creatures, the God of mercy, who would not that any one should perish, is this adorable Being a re-

specter of persons? Is his justice to be biased by your foolish distinctions? Or his mercy lessened by your uncharitable judgements? In vain you would make the Almighty a party in your quarrel, and pretend to be fighting in his cause! He disclaims such furious champions; nor will true religion allow of defenders, who are destroying the most glorious part of her system, that principle of universal charity, which, in the apostolical times, was the distinguishing mark of Christianity. It was then said, See how these Christians love one another! But now, sad contrast! See how these Christians hate one another! O blessed and ever-merciful God! look down with compassion on the deplorable state of the Christian world! See how thy church is laid waste and rent asunder, by the fraud, malice, or blind zeal of particular men: in one place over-run by superstition, in another undermined by scepticism; and every where robbed of her primitive peace and purity. O restore that purity! Restore that peace! Heal her breaches, reform her superstitions, and grant that we may, with one heart and one mind, with universal love and unbounded charity to our fellow-creatures, and a firm and lively faith in our blessed Redeemer, adore thee the only true God, and, after a life of piety and virtue, attain one of unalterable glory and happiness. *Amen.*

O God, thou art my God! early will I seek thee.

WHEN we are deprived of all the joys of life, betrayed by those we trusted, forsaken by our friends, triumphed over by our enemies, and robbed of our dearest hopes, where and to whom must we go for relief? What comfort can be hoped in a condition so desperate?—Will reflection on the past give us ease?—Alas! it makes our wounds still deeper; and every remembrance of the treachery of our friends, or the malice of our enemies, draws a new sigh from the oppressed and aching heart, and a fresh tear from the sinking eye.——Shall we look forward?—All dark and gloomy is the prospect, and the mind, wearied with affliction, and wholly depressed by grief and disappointments, shudders at the thought of launching again into the sea of delusions, of again trusting, and being again deceived. In circumstances so deplorable, nothing can calm our grief, nothing afford us one moment's peace, but seeking early after God; and happy, thrice happy! that soul, that can say with the royal Psalmist, *O God, thou art my God, my refuge in all my distresses, my only hope, and everlasting peace*:—A man who can look up to the great Author of nature with a confidence like this, who can seek after God with full assurance of finding him, and in him a sure relief for all the trouble and miseries of life, is superior to all events, and may be happy in the most terrible afflictions. Is he deprived of his estate, reduced to a despised and unrelieved poverty? He is still rich in the pleasing hopes, that his God will one day bestow on him a glorious and never-failing inheritance. Is he by death robbed of his dearest friends? His grief is immediately calmed, by the thoughts of that eternal state to which he is every moment approaching, and

where he will meet those dear objects of his tenderness, never, never to be parted from them more. Is his reputation made a sacrifice to spite and calumny, and himself condemned, reviled, and hated by his acquaintance? Still true to his principles, and firm in his trust on the Almighty, he braves the storm, and with joy looks forward to that day, when his accusers shall be covered with shame and confusion, and his innocence declared in the sight of men and angels. Is he betrayed by those he trusted with an unbounded confidence, by those who were dear to him as himself, and for whose life he would freely have paid his own? Even in this affliction (which is of all others the most grating to human nature) he is still master of himself, and possessing his soul in patience and resignation, looks up to that Friend who will never deceive him, to that God who is truth itself. Convinced of the folly of placing his love and trust on creatures, he fixes it wholly on the eternal Creator, and acknowledges with sincerity the mercy of God, in thus graciously releasing his heart from those deluding ties, which had so often drawn him from the centre of true happiness, the end of his being. Thus blessed is he, who can say with faith, gratitude, and humility, *O God, thou art my God!* — Grant, O most adorable and omnipotent Being! grant me this glorious privilege! I have nothing more to ask. That thou art my God, is a blessing infinitely greater than the whole creation can bestow; infinitely beyond all I can ask or conceive. Possessed of this, I can defy the combined malice of men and devils. Welcome distress, poverty, disappointment, and affliction of all kinds, even what I have most dreaded! Welcome all, if it is the will of Heaven! What hurt are ye capable of doing me, while I can say to the Rock of ages, “Thou art my God?” And certainly, O thou Fountain of life,

and Author of all good, it is thy gracious will that I should thus address thee; else why this firm reliance on thee in all my afflictions? Why this entire confidence on thy mercy and goodness, in the midst of my sufferings? How often, when my heart has been sinking under a load of sorrow, have I found relief and comfort, by applying to thee? In troubles which I have thought impossible to be endured, thou hast been my support; and when at any time I have been tempted to discontent, and dared to murmur and complain, how quickly has thy grace inspired me with remorse for my impiety, and enabled me to make a new act of resignation to thy providence! Sure and infallible proofs that thou art my God! And O may I never repay those instances of thy compassion and tender mercy with ingratitude! Never more distrust the power which has so often delivered me! But grant, Almighty Father, that in all the trials thou hast allotted me in this mortal state, I may seek thee early, and in seeking thee, find all the blessings thou hast promised, peace and perfect tranquillity in this life, and everlasting joy and happiness in the next! These favours, these blessings I implore in thy name, and for the sake of my merciful Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

E X T R A C T

FROM A

LITTLE DIARY.

JANUARY 5. 1754-5. Glory to the God of boundless mercy, who has this day, when sinking under great heaviness both of soul and body, lifted up the light of his countenance upon me, and made me drink deep of his redeeming love. O sweetest and most compassionate Jesus ! how do thy tender mercies follow and support my soul ; and still I am ungrateful, and still I am not as thou wouldst have me to be ! O when wilt thou make a full end of sin, and bring in thy perfect righteousness ? All things are possible to thee : and do I not know, do I not taste that thou art gracious ? O my Sun, my Shield, Life of my life, look into my heart ; I dare appeal to thine all-searching eye, that there is nothing so dear to it, but I would this moment part with it for thee ! And why then, dearest Lord, wilt thou not form thy whole blessed image in my soul ? My unworthiness, I know, is greater than that of any other creature in the universe ; but this unworthiness will the more magnify thy mercy. I have only my unworthiness to plead ; and I have no hope but in thine atoning blood : O let this blood, which has bought my peace, cleanse me also from every sin ; and let that blessed Spirit, who has sealed and witnessed this *peace* to my soul, be now a spirit of burning, to consume

all my dross, and to purify me as even as—O glorious prospect, heart enlivening hopes, let me sink into the dust before thee ! God of glory, God of purity, I am lost in self-abasement ! But hast thou not promised ! And wilt thou not fulfil thine own gracious word ! O give me then perfect sanctification of body, soul, and spirit ; and let this heavy cross, which seems now coming upon me, be, by thine all-powerful grace, turned into a means of forwarding thy blessed work in my soul. Let every bitter cup which thou permittest to be given me, be joyfully received, as serving in some degree to conform me to thy sufferings ; and let me in all things, though ever so contrary to my corrupt nature, give thanks, and say continually, Lord, not my will, but thine be done. *Amen.*



FINIS.

